

2001

ISSUE # 32

BRUTARIAN

QUARTERLY

\$5.00

Randy Cassingham

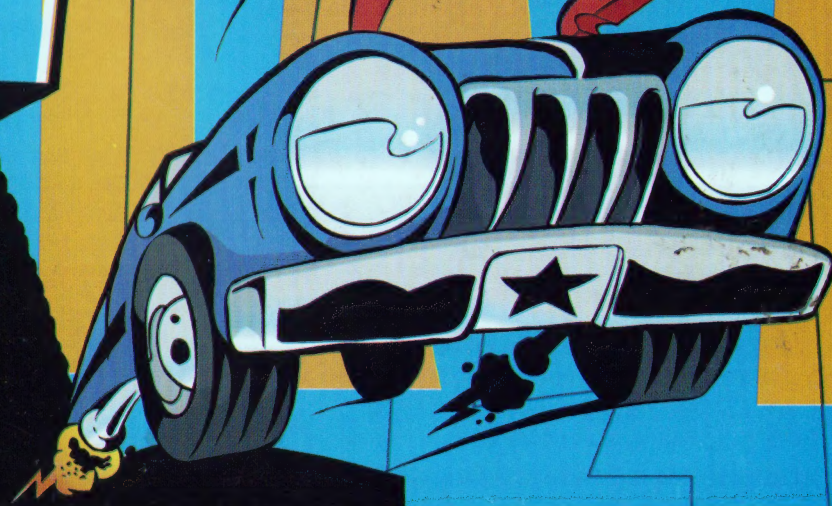
The Dictators

Robert Moog

Flaming Lips

Catfight

Moby



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7447093152



Armchair Logic

Dear Sirs:

Sure, I might strike you as an over-bearing, pompous asshole, who knows next to nothing about football compared with the average fan sitting in front of his set, scratching his nuts and quaffing brews.

However, does this average fan possess behind-the-scenes candid photos of Don Ohlmeyer trying to turn Al Michaels from a "tight end" into a "wide receiver," if you get my drift? Didn't think so!

—Dennis Miller
ABC Studio Men's Room,
New York

do!"

—Joe DiMaggio
Still in Purgatory

It's Too Late

My Good Friend and Loyal
Supporter, Dom:

Here's a real knee-slapper that I just heard from Daddy. How many confused blue-haired Jews from Palm Beach does it take to figger out how to vote using one of them fancy manual butterfly ballots? Give up? Answer: I don't know, and I don't care!!! Haha-haha! — See you at a White House dinner real soon!

—Your Friend and President
George W. Bush
Cow Dung, Texas

Are You Listening? I Said, It's Too Late!

Dom:

I would just like to add my 2 cents worth about this voting fiasco. Some of my best friends are Jews. So are some of my best lampshades, book covers, and bars of soap. So there!

—Patrick Buchanan
Reform Party Candidate
Herring Breath, Virginia

What Is Wrong With You People?

Sir:

Oh, is the election over? How did I do?

—Ralph Nader
Lost In Space, Nebraska

Docking Procedures

Mr. Salemi:

It is with great interest that I read your comment in Issue #30 about Danny Hellman recently traveling to San Francisco, and learning about docking.

However, since your Mr. Hellman is obviously a circumcised dirty Jew, what would he REALLY know about docking? He can't even be a docker! Or would that be a dockee? Damn, this docking etiquette throws me into such a tizzy!

—Lance Myrear
Glory Hole # 3,
Blow Buddies, SF, CA

I Said, It's Too Late

Sir:

I personally take the greatest offense at that insulting, offensive, bigoted letter from Governor Bush above. He clearly fails to see three points that I would like to make crystal clear about the Presidential election irregularities in Florida. First, I invented those ballots. Second, I passed Mind Reading 101 in college, and I personally know the intentions of each and every one of those valued constituents whom he refers to as "blue-haired Jews." Third, because of my mind reading powers, I know for an incontrovertible fact that those senile kikes did NOT mean to vote for that neo-Nazi Buchanan! Now, about that 34th hand count of those votes...

—Albert Gore
Vice-President and Wannabe Prez
Washington, DC

It's Only Just Begun...

My Friends and Constituents:

As my first official act as your Senator, I'd like to congratulate the New York Jets on winning their 3rd straight World Series. Well done!

—The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
Muffdiver, New York

Waaaaaay Too Late

Sirs:

My heartiest congratulations to Governor Bush. Not even I ever thought of using my own brother to help me win a close race. And hello, Julie and Tricia!

—Richard M. Nixon
2nd Stall, Hell

Haven't Heard This One Since Third Grade

Mr. Salemi & Co.:

What's the difference between a rooster and Marilyn Monroe?

A rooster goes "Cock-A-Doodle-Do," and Marilyn went "Any cock'll

BRUTARIAN

The Space Odyssey Issue

#32

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NEW YEAR!!

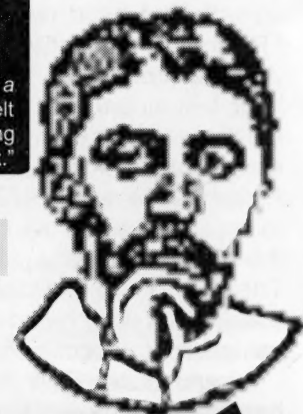
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"That's not surprising as we're raising a generation of idiots."

—Ray Bradbury, when asked by a Washington Post feature writer how he felt with today's generation of readers finding his work "difficult."



"The older I get, the less impressed I am with the need for intelligence."

—Marcel Proust

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Web chimp/Magazine layout/Taking care of Mrs. Claus: David "Indy" Fitzpatrick Artist/Columnist/North Pole bonfire man: Danny Hellman
Saving Grace: Hobbes, Brutarian's mascot and real editor... this issue is dedicated to her... she will be sorely missed.

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ANDY SHERNOFF AND HANDSOME DICK MANITOBA

THE DICTATORS

by John Oliver

I first became aware of The Dictators when I picked up a copy of *The Dictators Go Girl Crazy* (Columbia Records) at a Giant Music in 1975. What compelled me to pick up this LP was the cover — a professional wrestler (or so I thought at the time) in his shiniest, most sparkly ring gear, posing like a peacock, letting the World know just what a badass he was. I took a chance and bought the LP...and fell in love with the music of this band immediately. Between the ass — kicking Rock & Roll coupled with the funniest lyrics I'd ever heard, and the wrestling promos this lunatic did between songs several times, I had clearly found one of the greatest records of all time!

My opinion of *Go Girl Crazy* hasn't changed one iota over the past 25 years. Songs such as "Next Big Thing," "Weekend," "Teengenerate," "Two Tub Man" and "Cars and Girls" still hold up today as well as they did when released. The band released 2 other LP's in the 70's — the disappointing (but how could ANY follow-up to their first album NOT be?) *Manifest Destiny* on Asylum in '77, then somewhat of a return to form with *Blood Brothers* in 1978. With the exception of some live bootlegs and the ROIR live tape "Fuck 'Em If They Can't Take a Joke" from around '81 or '82, nothing much else was heard from the Dictators during the 80's, aside from the occasional reunion gig in NYC.

Lead guitar God Ross The Boss resurfaced in several hard rock bands — notably Shakin' Street, Heyday and metal mavens Manowar. Rhythm guitarist Scott "Top Ten" Kemper was in the Del-Lords from the mid-80's to early 90's, cut a very good solo LP in "Tenement Angels" in '92 (Razor & Tie records), and played and wrote songs with Dion for awhile. Songwriter and bassist Andy (or Adny) Shernoff seemed to keep busy producing a wide variety of bands. "Manifest Destiny" bassist Mark "The Animal" Mendoza joined Twisted Sister. Handsome Dick and the two drummers (Stu Boy King and Richie Teeter) — who knows where they were in the 80's?

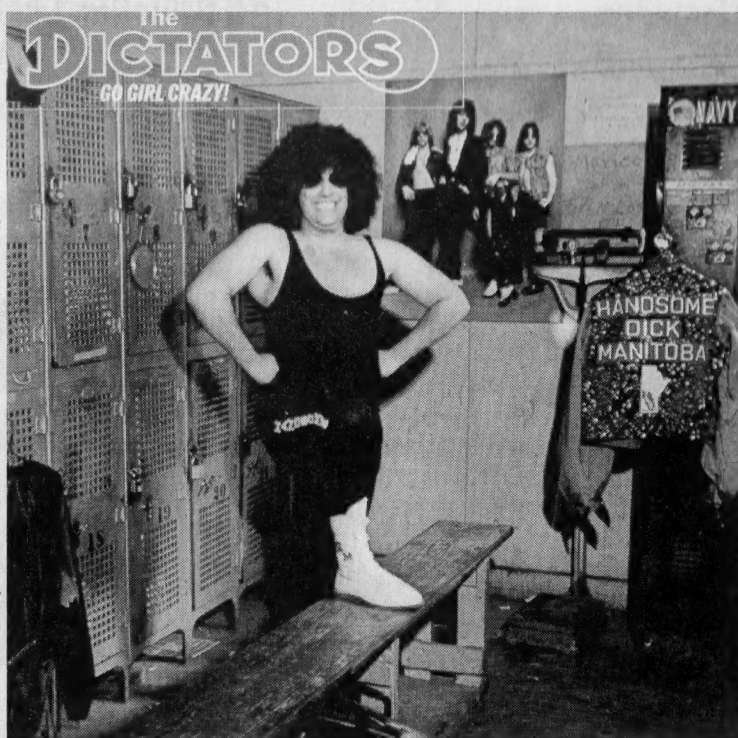
Toward the end of the 80's, I heard a rumor about a new band — Manitoba's Wild Kingdom. They appeared briefly in the movie *Mondo New York*, playing the old Dictators live

chestnut "New York, New York." In 1990, they released a new LP/CD, *And You?* and they toured in support of this... even cut a video that was played a couple of times on MTV for "The Party Starts Now," if I recall. Featuring three originals, Andy, Ross the Boss, and Handsome Dick, the Manitoba's Wild Kingdom LP/CD is generally considered by most 'Tators fans to be the second best LP by The Dictators...

even if Top Ten was missing and they had a new drummer (Thunderbolt Patterson — no relation to the black pro wrestler by that name, I'm sure). On the heels of the Wild Kingdom CD and tour, the Dictators regrouped and toured briefly again in 1991. As Andy has stated in various interviews, the band never quit, they never split up... they just take occasional rests, sometimes for years on end.

Since the Wild Kingdom LP, the band's fans have had to settle for 2 singles: "I Am Right"/"Loyola" in '96 on Norton, and "Who Will Save Rock &

Roll?"/"Savage Beat" in '97 on some Spanish label, plus a couple of compilation cuts by Handsome Dick on a Brian Wilson tribute ("Dance, Dance, Dance") and Sam The Sham tribute ("Ju Ju Hand")... and the band did a cut on the "Boys Don't Cry" soundtrack ("What's Up With That?"), PLUS... the band started playing on a semi-regular basis again! (NOTE: I believe Andy's new band Master Plan has also released 1-2 singles over the past year or so.) From '96 on, the band has played at least a handful of gigs per year. In September 2000, they again returned to Washington, DC, to play that Hell-hole known as The Black Cat. The day before the show, Andy emailed me that they would be happy to talk with BRUTARIAN after the show. As Mr. Salemi can't stay out that late anymore, my friend Miss Kim and I braved the ever dangerous neighborhood of 14th Street to go see the return of The Dictators. They played their usual great show, including several new songs from the upcoming CD — "Avenue A" and a cover of the Dead Boys' "Sonic Reducer." We join our inter-



view after the show, downstairs in one of the dressing rooms at the Black Cat. Handsome Dick Manitoba, truly the handsomest man in Rock & Roll, is hoarse, Andy Shernoff is tired, and Kim and I are almost deaf from standing too damn close to the speakers at the front of the stage. (AND... for those who are interested, yes, Crazy Larry was there, and yes, he danced like a damn fool throughout the opening act's set — some band whose name eludes me; they weren't very good.)

BRUTARIAN: Is the new CD done yet?

Andy Shernoff (AS): We have about 13 songs recorded, and we want to record about 2 or 3 more, and then we expect to be able to put it out. We just want to make the best possible CD we can do... and it's pretty close.

BRUT: Do you have a label?

AS: We've been talking with a few people.

BRUT: I was talking with Roy Loney back in July... his interview will be in the next issue (ED. NOTE: # 31). He's had a new CD with the Long Shots in the can and ready to go for quite some time, but he can't seem to find anybody willing to put it out.

AS: Roy's a great guy!

Handsome Dick Manitoba (HDM): He's a really nice guy! He got on stage and played with us last year when we played San Francisco.

BRUT: So I heard. I called Norton the other day, to order some CD's via mail order, and I'm sure I was talking with Billy (Miller). I thought about lobbying him over the phone about Roy's CD, but... the 13 songs you've already put down. I take it those are the tracks listed on your web site?

AS: Yeah.

BRUT: The title of one fascinated me — "Jim Gordon Blues." I assume we're talking about the drummer? (ED. NOTE: Former Derek & The Dominos and studio whiz drummer from the 70's, Jim Gordon, who went crazy and killed his mother with an axe.)

AS: Sure.

BRUT: Is he still alive?

AS: Well, I think he's still alive, but he's in jail. He killed his mother.

BRUT: Yeah, didn't he say in court that he heard voices telling him to kill her?

AS: Yeah, he went cuckoo... but he was a great drummer. Yes, that song is about him.

BRUT: Is the Dead Boys' "Sonic Reducer" the only cover that'll be on the new record?

AS: Yes, that's the only one.

BRUT: So "I Feel Alright" isn't the old Iggy song? (ED. NOTE:

Actually, it was called "1970")

AS: Nope, it's a new song of ours.

BRUT: An old song of yours I'd like to ask you about — "16 Forever" — have you guys ever recorded it?

AS: Yes, actually we did record that, and we have the master tape. We'll probably release it with a bunch of other old demos at some point... but this'll be after the new record comes out.

BRUT: Yeah, I first heard that song on a Nomads CD... then I think somebody covered it on the Dictators tribute that came out on Roto Records... by the way, I thought that was an excellent tribute CD! (ED. NOTE: Volume 2 of *Dictators Forever, Forever Dictators* has since come out on Roto — also recommended.)

AS: Yes, we liked that, too.

BRUT: During the Roy Loney interview, when I asked him for his all-time favorite cover of a Flamin' Groovies song by another band, he responded — The Dictators' cover of "Slow Death."

HDM: All right! Yeah, that's the song we did with him last year in San Francisco.

BRUT: Yeah, he mentioned that he'd be coming back to NYC to play this month at Chris Cush's 15th Anniversary show for Mojo Guitars.

AS: I haven't heard anything about that... but we've been out of the country for awhile, and I don't really know what's going on in NY.

BRUT: Question — Manifest Destiny re-released on CD — When?

AS: Don't ask us, we don't know!

BRUT: You don't have the rights to it?

AS: Well, we can get the rights... but our main job now is getting out the new one.

Then we'll see about reissuing that one.

HDM: And doing the box set! (laughs from all)

BRUT: Dictators' side projects... Ross has The Spinatras, and you, Andy, have Master Plan. Who's in that band?

AS: That's me, Keith Streng and Bill Milhizer from the Flesh-tones, and my friend Phil Johnson. We'll be playing Manitoba's on October 14th.

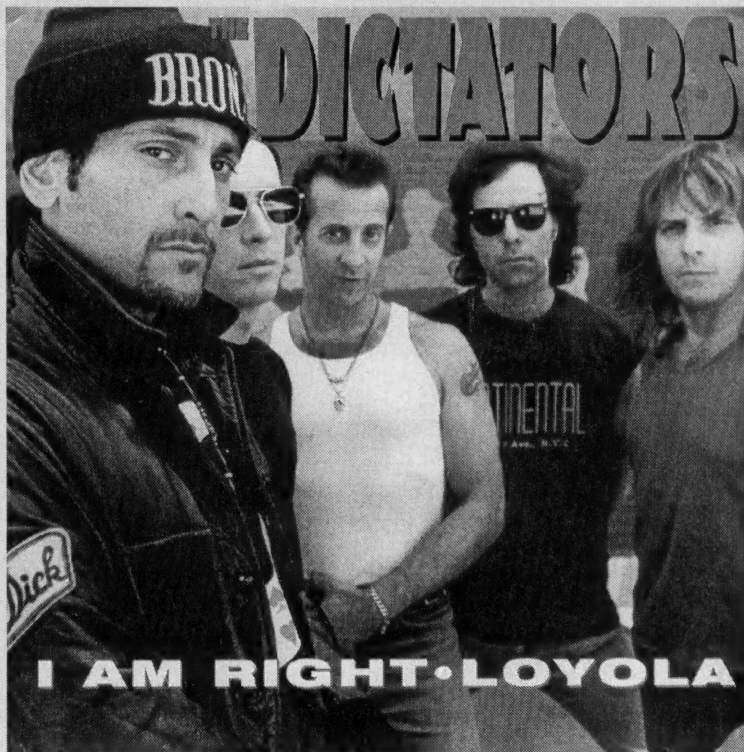
BRUT: Top Ten, Scott — any side projects? Is he still playing with Dion?

AS: No, he's not. But he has recorded a solo record, though.

BRUT: A follow-up to *Tenement Angels*? Excellent! Then, I've got a few solo tracks from the Handsome One — the Brian Wilson and Sam the Sham tributes. Dick, any other solo stuff recently?

HDM: No... Every few years, somebody asks me to do something like that... I have fun doing it.

BRUT: What's your all-time favorite cover of one of your





songs by another band?

AS: Hmmmm... I'd say Dion doing "Stay With Me." (ED. NOTE: From the *Little Kings Live in NY* impossible-to-find CD, where Dion played with Dictators Scott Kempner and Frank Funaro, among others. Dion may have also cut "Stay With Me" as a 45, but I'm not sure.) That's pretty cool.

HDM: Yeah, Dion, he's like the Roy Orbison of the Bronx. I mean, we're both singers in bands, but when I'm around him, I'm just a fan. I mean — he's Dion, he's in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

BRUT: Speaking of the Bronx, you're all Yankees fans except Ross?

HDM: He's a Yankees fan second, but he's a Mets fan first.

BRUT: Am I crazy, or has Joe Torre been way too loyal to (David) Cone this year? (NOTE: At this point in the 2000 season, Cone's record is about 3-12, and the Yankees are leading their division by about 4-5 games.)

HDM: Well, what were his options?

BRUT: He had a healthy (Ramiro) Mendoza for most of the season — he's been pretty good as a spot starter the last 3 years.

HDM: I'd keep Mendoza in the bullpen. Cone is such a gamer...

BRUT: And he's looked really good the past 3-4 starts.

HDM: He really got bombed by Cleveland tonight — something like 11-0, the last I heard.

BRUT: Shit! Oh well... at least I'd rather see the Indians as the wild card team instead of the Red Sox! Question about the scene in New York. During my last two interviews for this magazine (Shane White, Roy Loney), we talked about the decline of San Francisco as a musical scene over the past 10 years.

AS: But Quicksilver Messenger Service is coming back!

BRUT: Yeah, I saw where they played the Bottom Line last month — it was Gary Duncan and... one other original.

AS: David Freiberg. We're playing San Francisco next week. We had a great time there last year — we always do.

BRUT: Has the New York music scene gone to Hell in a hand basket recently, what with the new (Mayor Rudy) Giuliani cabaret law?

AS: I don't know that there's really been much of a scene in New York since the 70's. There have been a few good bands, but... in the 70's, we had Mink DeVille, Blondie, Talking Heads, Television, the Ramones, Dictators, the Dead Boys, and others. Since then...?

BRUT: At least, you've always had tons of clubs, tons of venues for hearing rock music, though.

HDM: Back then (70's), there were like 20 after hours clubs you could go to. Not too many now.

BRUT: It seems like Giuliani is trying to turn New York into a big strip mall or something. I mean, it used to be fun roaming around the Times Square area — it was so sleazy. Now, it's like Disney World there.

AS: There never used to be as much money in the city, though. Now there's a lot more money, rents are a lot higher. There are really no more bad neighborhoods in Manhattan. Every neighborhood there has been gentrified.

BRUT: New subject. Starting with *The Dictators Go Girl Crazy* back in '75 — it seems like all the critics and hardcore fans have always adored you guys. As in the case of so many great Rock & Roll bands, though, you never enjoyed commercial success commensurate with your standing with the critics and fans. Comments?

AS: Well, we've been doing this for about 25 years now, off and on. I love it, I've never sold out, and I'm going to keep on doing it. The fact that I'm able to keep playing, and so many people seem to love us — I'm very grateful for that.

HDM: I don't look at it as why I don't have this or that... I'm focusing on the fact that, 20 years later, people are still so passionate about us.

AS: Aside from a couple of singles, we haven't put out a record in 20 years, but our audience seems to keep growing in size.

HDM: And you can, like, look at Madison Square Garden and go "I'm a failure, I never played there," or you can say, 20 years later, people still dig us! You have to take



what you can get, there's no point in being bitter about it. Me, I'm having a ball getting paid to travel and play. We go to Spain, we go to California...

BRUT: Are you guys big in Spain?

AS: Yeah, they love us there.

BRUT: They seem to have the best taste in music in that country.

AS: The crowd tonight was pretty good... but we draw a lot better in other cities, like LA, San Francisco, Chicago, and New York, of course. We haven't been to Washington in a long time.

BRUT: You played the old 9:30 Club in '91, if I recall, and prior to that, Manitoba's Wild Kingdom played there in '90.

AS: That's right.

BRUT: My ex-brother-in-law and I saw Wild Kingdom at Hammerjack's in Baltimore in '90. That club stood about where the Baltimore Ravens stadium is now... or at least the parking lot for the stadium.

HDM: Oh, really?

BRUT: We were 2 of about 45-50 people who saw that show. We were both drunk as Hell, plus my ex-brother-in-law had just started on Prozac... and we stood down front and kept yelling for "Two Tub Man," which you, of course, didn't play.

(Handsome Dick wanders off at this point.)

BRUT: So what music do you listen to and enjoy nowadays?

AS: Me, I listen to the Beatles, Stones, Kinks, Who, Dylan... I just got a new Bert Bacharach box set, I like that.

BRUT: Anybody new or recent you listen to?

AS: I like Garbage. It's like 60's music, only done modern and computerized.

BRUT: How about the Scandinavian bands doing 70's rock?

AS: The Hellacopters are great! Turbonegro, I like... we just saw Gluecifer in Madrid last week.

BRUT: What else do you guys do in addition to the band? (To Andy) I understand you're a wine consultant.

AS: Yeah, it's like a hobby of mine. I consult with restaurants and wine bars, and I work at a retail store a couple of days a week.

BRUT: And Handsome Dick has his bar. *(ED. NOTE: Manitoba's in Manhattan, address is: 99 Avenue B, between 6th and 7th Avenues; phone is (212) 982-2511.)* The others?

AS: Ross has his own business with his wife, and the other guys... they don't seem to do much else.

BRUT: Oh, they have money, do they? (Andy nods.) What is Handsome Dick's connection to the Coyote Men? *(ED. NOTE: On their Call of the Coyote Men EP on Estrus Re-*

cords, the English-based Coyote Men's singer, Helmut "The Bruiser" Von Schoen, does a VERY good impersonation of Handsome Dick at the start of the EP with the wrestling intros... even referring to their guitarist as "the handsomest man in Rock & Roll... aside from me!" To add insult to injury, on the back of the EP sleeve is — "Refereed by Handsome Dick Manitoba")

AS: I don't know... I never heard of them...

BRUT: Hmmm... oh well! A question I've always wanted to ask you — what exactly is a "Two Tub Man?" Is that from an old wrestling interview, perhaps?

AS: Oh, I can't tell you that! If I did, I'd have to kill both you and your friend (motioning to Miss Kim), then I'd be in jail.

BRUT: I see...

(At this point, Andy leaves, but Handsome Dick returns... at which point yours truly, always a glutton for punishment tries the last 2 questions again, with similar results.)

BRUT: Dick, is that you on the Coyote Men EP?

HDM: Huh? No, I never heard of that band.

BRUT: Dammit, if it isn't, it's sure somebody that sounds a lot like you!

HDM: Interesting... no, I've never heard those guys at all.

BRUT: OK... let me run THIS one by you then... what's a "Two Tub Man?"

HDM: It's art. It's up to you to interpret what it means. It's also, by the way, the first song Andy ever wrote.

BRUT: I was wondering if it might have originated from an old wrestling show. I remember the Scufflin' Hillbillies in the 60's, with their manager Cousin Alfred, who was always threatening in interviews to wash Wild Red Berry (manager of The

Fabulous Kangaroos, the pre-eminent tag team at the time) in a number two washtub, whatever the Hell that was.

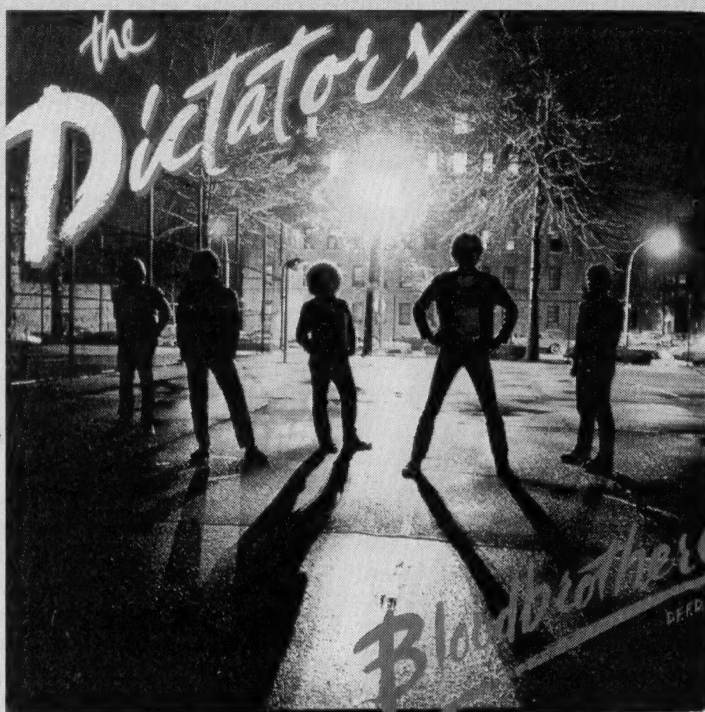
HDM: Yeah, I remember all those guys... but no, that's not where he got that term from.

BRUT: Speaking of wrestling... it was your great pose in your wrestling gear on the cover of *Go Girl Crazy* that first brought that record to my attention in '75. Then I read the back of the LP, with references to engineer Corky Stasiak's heart punch and the like... and I bought it... and I've been hooked ever since.

HDM: Yeah, we've always been wrestling fans.

BRUT: A wrestling question from my publisher, Dom... who couldn't make it tonight, as it's past his bedtime: Any comments on WCW hiring and using the Misfits? After all, you, Handsome Dick, are the real thing!

HDM: Ah, man... those guys (Jerry & Doyle of The Misfits) are into pumping iron and bodybuilding, they're huge. More power to them, they're really nice guys... although, frankly, I just can't stand watching WCW wrestling any-





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more. It's so bad, the writing is terrible.

BRUT: I agree... but I'm not all that fond of the WWF, either.

HDM: I like to tune into that show, just to see what the amazing brain of Vince McMahon is going to come up with next.

BRUT: Personally, I don't like watching his whole damn family taking over that show from the wrestlers...

HDM: Yeah, but he comes up with some great stuff! I mean, I own a bar now, and this guy who works for me named Adam Roth, he loves to take the piss out of me behind the bar. I don't make millions like McMahon, I make hundreds of dollars... but everybody just likes to laugh at their boss and make fun of them.

BRUT: Yeah, that's true — it is fun (and profitable, as McMahon has proven) to vicariously live through someone just beating the Hell out of their boss on television.

HDM: I gotta wrap this up now. I have to save my voice for tomorrow night (Baltimore show).

BRUT: OK, Dick, one last question: Hillary (Clinton) or (Rick) Lazio in the upcoming election?

HDM: My family and I have always been Democrats. I can't vote for Lazio, but I'm not too happy about pulling the lever for Hillary Clinton, either!

BRUT: OK, that's it, I'm pretty much out of questions... I was worried that, with this interview being after the show, I wouldn't be able to hear, and you wouldn't be able to speak! I think it came out alright... thanks a lot for talking with us. Great show tonight!

HDM: Thanks, a pleasure meeting you!

EPILOGUE: Questions that I wanted to ask Andy and Dick, but wasn't able to:

- (1) Andy's most enjoyable/most fulfilling producing gig -- he's produced a variety of great bands over the past 10 years, including: The Barracudas, Waldos, Untamed Youth, Zantees, Vacant Lot, Kowalski's, and others.
- (2) The derivation of the phrase "I Am Right" — the name of their 1996 single, as well the slogan emblazoned on the back of at least one (if not more) of Handsome Dick's jackets. Offhand, I recall at least 3 pro wrestling managers who generously used this expression — Wild Red Berry in the 50's and 60's, Bobby Heenan in the AWA in the 70's, and George "Crybaby" Cannon, from the Cleveland-based IWA in the 70's.
- (3) I'd also like to get a list of cover songs The Dictators have played over the years, other than those they've recorded and released. I'm aware of: Sonic Reducer (Dead Boys), Call Me Animal (MC5), and Shakin' All Over (J. Kidd & Pirates). I'm sure there are others.
- (4) Will the Handsome One return to doing wrestling promos and mini-interview segments between songs on the new CD? If not, why not? With pro wrestling being relatively hot now, this COULD be just the thing to boost their sales!

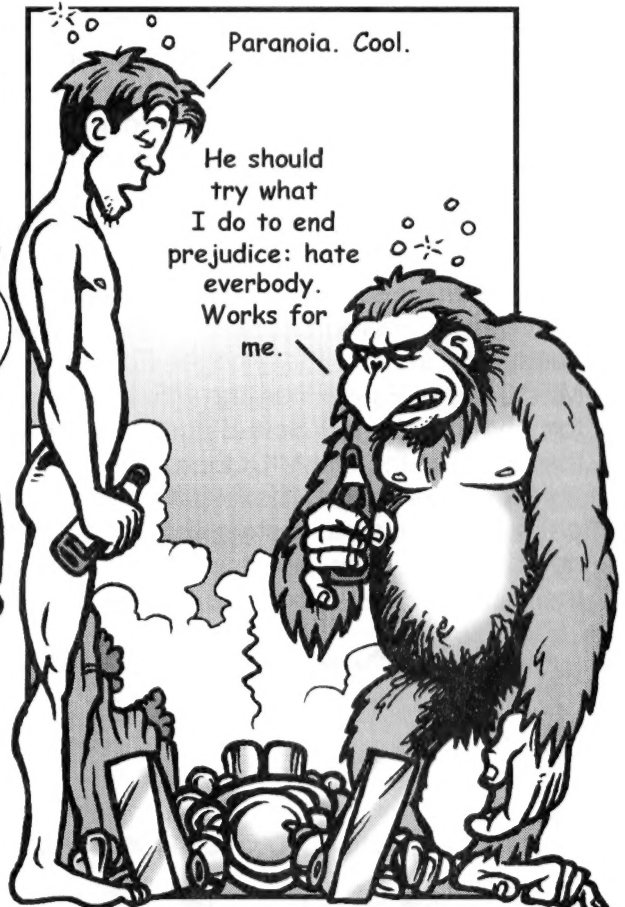
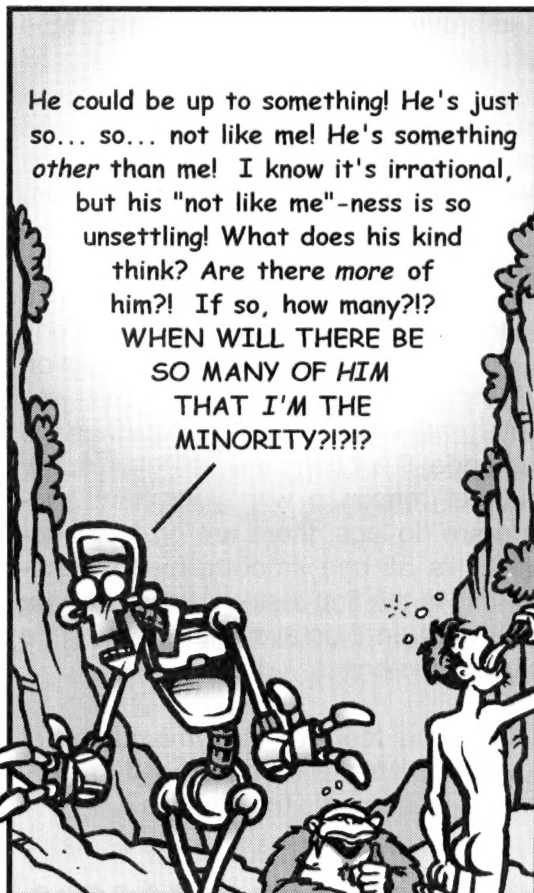
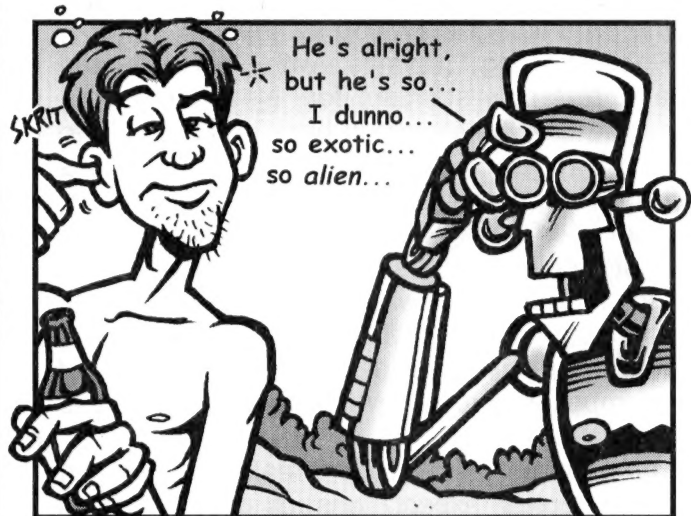
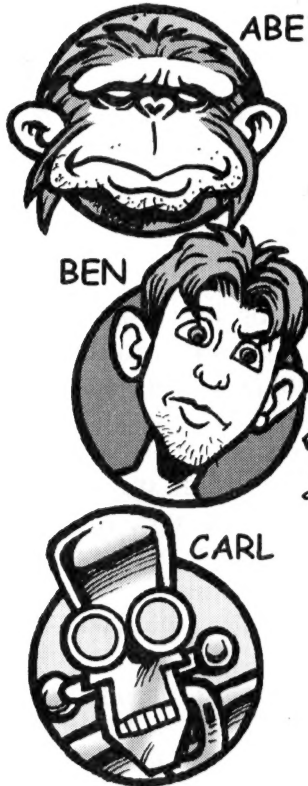
DFFD! BQ

John Oliver is really the guy in charge here at *Brutarian*. We just don't tell Salemi that. Learn about him at:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/oliverjohn.htm>

THE THINKING APE BLUES by Mark Poutenis

STARRING THE
**PROGRESS
BROS.**



An Interview with

ROBERT MOOG

With the invention of the Moog synthesizer in 1964, Dr. Robert Moog (rhymes with "vogue" and "rogue") set a new standard for electronic instruments—instead of having to go back to the studio to splice tape to turn pre-recorded electronic noises into passable music, you could do all of your composing and performing on the Moog synthesizer, as well as store electronic sounds you created on the synth for future use. It was only necessary to set the controls prior to playing the instrument. The Moog synth quickly found popularity with *avant garde* composers such as W. Carlos and Herbert A. Deutsch.

Even though his groundbreaking invention changed people's expectations of popular music and virtually invented prog rock overnight, the Moog Synthesizer Company soon went broke. Larger companies such as Arp and Roland developed Moog's prototypes into more sophisticated and economical instruments, while Dr. Moog went back to working on his first viable product—the theremin. Named after the plot of land in North Carolina his and his wife's new house was being built on, Big Briar Cove, Moog's new company started out manufacturing strictly traditional theremin kits.

Over the years, Big Briar's product line has expanded to include the Mooger Fooger series (the MF-101 Low Pass Filter, the MF-102 Ring Modulator, and the MF-103 Sole-Stage Phaser) as well as the Ethervox—the first MIDI theremin.

Moog first began developing his ideas for his prototype electronic instruments at a fairly young age. His father, an amateur radio operator, taught the young Robert Moog the basics of electronics

when he was eight, and at 14, Moog had already built his first Theremin after reading an article in *Radio Age* magazine. "I knew just enough about music to read notes and know basic things about sound," says Moog, who took piano lessons as a child and later covered some of his college expenses playing fraternity gigs and hotel bars. "But I always considered myself a technical person, not a musician."

BRUTARIAN: What has been the lasting attraction of the theremin for you?

MOOG: Oh, it's a combination of figuring out some really interesting engineering problems and the opportunity to do something musical.

BRUT: What improvements have you made on the theremin design with Big Briar?

MOOG: Leon Theremin was a real genius, and he did a lot of very clever and insightful things back in the '20s. His designs, by and large, are hard to improve on. The whole thing about the theremin is that any one little sound of the theremin is a very simple sound that can be bent with the way you move your hands or body around it. It's a very liquid sound, there's motion in it, and that can't be reproduced as well through any other interface. With the Ethervox, you can change the pitch and volume of any sound in direct response with your hand motions. There are no lags, there are no steps between notes, it's all one smooth, musical motion. I think this is the first instrument where you have control over an 8-octave MIDI pitch range with absolute smoothness.

BRUT: What do you feel are the advantages of playing a MIDI theremin as opposed to playing the original instruments themselves?

by

HOLLY DAY

MOOG: The whole thing about the theremin is that any one little sound of the theremin is a very simple sound that can be bent with the way you move your hands or body around it. It's a very liquid sound, there's motion in it, and that can't be reproduced as well through any other interface. With the Ethervox, you can change the pitch and volume of any sound in direct response with your hand motions. There are no lags, there are no steps between notes, it's all one smooth, musical motion. I think this is the first instrument where you can control over an 8-octave MIDI pitch range with absolute smoothness. The MIDI theremin consists of a regular theremin, a part that converts the regular theremin output to MIDI pitch bend messages and different volume messages. The reason that the pitch bend is important is because the pitch bend message provides the means for changing the pitch over a range as great as ten octaves, which of course is the entire keyboard range. It also provides the inaccuracies between the MIDI notes so you don't hear the steps. It's one of the few MIDI messages that allows that wide a range of sounds while staying within the natural sound of the instrument at the same time. So anyway, the MIDI theremin consists of a high quality theremin, a part that converts the theremin sound into MIDI and provides the MIDI messages that follow the pitch and volume of the theremin, and the third part is a sound module that gets its commands from MIDI, that will reconstruct the theremin wave form and all the pitch and volume changes that you play, so if you wanted to, you could play something on the theremin, record the MIDI data stream, play back the MIDI data stream, and it will sound exactly the same as when you played it, but it will be coming from the sound module part of the instrument. Then you can play on top of that recorded sound, so it will be like playing two parts at the same time on theremin.

BRUT: How much involvement do you have in Big Briar products? Do you design all the products and see them through, or do you only work on specific projects?

MOOG: By and large, I work on everything that comes out of Big Briar. Right now, it's a very small company, and I am the engineer for Big

Briar. There are other people in the company who contribute a lot of good ideas so far as the design work goes, but ultimately, it's my responsibility to decide what instruments we actually build and release, and then make sure that those projects happen.

BRUT: Do you do mostly custom designs or mass market-appeal products?

MOOG: We don't do any custom designs anymore. Up until about 1994, a large percentage of what I did was custom designs—it was just me and one part-time assistant in the company back then, and we did one job at a time out of a very small shop. From 1994 to the present, we've become an actual staff of employees and have devoted ourselves to putting together a product line to be worked on a regular production business.

BRUT: I heard you designed one of your first keyboards for composer Max Brand.

MOOG: Good Lord, how did you hear about that? That was a long time ago! When I first began working with synthesizers, around 1959, Brand somehow found out about it and contacted me. Brand was an old man by then, maybe in his sixties. He wanted me to make him an instrument that he described to me that was like a trautonium—that was an instrument that was built in Germany in the late 1930s, I guess, and was refined over the years by the person who built it, Oscar Salle. Max Brand wanted to build this instrument, and he kept pestering me about it. I did the best I could, but from my point of view, he was a difficult person to work with. He wouldn't specify things that he wanted me to do, yet he insisted that I do as much as I could for him. So I did build him something, but I wouldn't say that it worked particularly well, and I'm not sure that he ever made any music with it, but I might be wrong about it. He was going deaf; all the equipment in his house was constantly hissing and humming and he couldn't hear any of it. I couldn't figure out what I was supposed to do for him, or what he was trying to do.

BRUT: How come your original Moog keyboards have survived the test of time so well as opposed to those released by your competitors?

What's the secret to making a road-worthy keyboard?

MOOG: Really, it's all just mechanical details. The MiniMoog, which was designed in 1971, uses pretty sturdy metal support pieces inside, and the cabinet is 5/8" thick solid hardwood. I've seen a few that have broken apart over the years, but most of them-even the ones that have been on the road with bands for more than 10 years-have stayed together. Another important thing that is often neglected by manufacturers is that the controls that stick out have to have shafts and knobs that are really sturdy. A manufacturer can use potentiometers that cost 25-30 cents each that are all cheap plastic, or they can use potentiometers that are 75 cents each that are made of molded nylon and brass, which is a really tough combination. We use the latter. Today, Big Briar's MoogerFooger modulators are made with the very same controls that they put on arcade games-you know, where the kids beat on them with extreme force and determination, hour after hour. They'll be around for another thirty-forty years, too.

BRUT: What do you think is the next step in synthesizer design? Do you have any ideas for practical new interfaces that will replace the standard keyboard?

MOOG: Well, you've hit on exactly what the next step is. I think sound generation is a maturing technology. Between analog and digital technology, you can make just about any sounds you can imagine, cheaply, and easily. What we don't have available cheaply and easily are really good player interfaces. We have electronic organs, basically-the same keyboards that were put into electronic organs forty-fifty years ago are being used today. There's very little difference in design insofar as interfaces go; they feel the same. In fact, the Hammond organ keyboards, which were developed in 1935, feel better than most keyboards that are designed today. The keyboard interface is just a starting point, if you think of all the ways that people like to move and push and touch when they're playing music. I think the field is wide open for developing really sophisticated, really human-oriented control devices. We're just getting to learn things like that. There are plas-

tic keyboards that have some touch sensitivity to them, or that you can wear around your neck like a guitar. I've done some experimental work with keyboards where each key is touch-sensitive in 2 and 3 dimensions. But right now, the technology is so expensive. I've built four of them, and two of them are in use, but they're very experimental. Every once in a while, you see an article in a technology magazine where they mention some really sophisticated control transducer or control surface, and little by little, that stuff is working its way into products that musicians can actually buy and learn to play on.

BRUT: What do you think has been the long-lasting appeal of the keyboard as a synthesizer interface?

MOOG: People know how to play it. Millions of people know how to play the piano-that's usually the first instrument people learn how to play music and learn how to read music on. If someone was to start off learning a completely new control device at the age of thirty or forty, they'd have to practice that device as much as when they first started out on the piano. You know what that's similar to? It's similar to the Dvorak computer keyboard, where you can type twenty or thirty percent faster because of how the keyboard is laid out. Anybody can do it, but very few people actually try because it takes a certain amount of learning and practice when you're an adult. Your mother's not going to teach you how to type on a Dvorak keyboard. You're going to have to learn how to use it as an adult, when you've already got plenty of other things to do. New alternate controls are like that, too. Designing them is going to be only half the job-the other half is going to be musicians developing technique on them. It's going to take decades for it to actually happen.

BQ

Holly Day is a grand wonder wrapped in an awesome amazement surrounded by a glorious achievement supported by unmatched incredulity bench-pressing a big run of luck... oh, anyway:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/others/dayholly.htm>

MAD ABOUT MEAT J. Osterhout



IN DEFENSE OF HIS BEAUTY

MOBY'S

PLAY PERFECTS THE ART OF PASTICHE

Moby is justifiably self-conscious — he's a demure crossover genius or techno defector (depending on your allegiances) who stomps his feet when dim-witted journalists misinterpret his work. He's on a 21-month (!) tour in support of his ambient masterpiece, *Play*. And he's openly pissed off that many view him as just a cut-and paste noise collector -- another sonic architect using the technology of today to benefit from the creativity of yore.

"The music I make [doesn't] really involve samples," explains the 34-year-old electro-king. "On *Play*, the only samples are the vocal samples. All of the instruments are played by me." You mean, on your synthesizer? "No! Instruments!" he insists. "You know, things that you pick up that are actually instruments? Guitar, drums, bass, keyboard, etc."

Ohhhh... those! I gotcha, Moby.

"I am a musician," Moby continues in a hear-me-roar-at-your-ignorance declaration. "I've been playing guitar since I was eight years old. I taught myself piano, drums, and bass. I'm not some DJ-sample kid."

So let me get this straight, Mobe — other non-educates like myself make you feel misunderstood? "That's the frustrating thing," he responds. "I was just now with a friend of mine listening to the record, and it was the song, 'South Side,' and he said, 'So where'd you get those guitars from?' [I responded,] 'I played them.' 'Well, the strings...?' 'I played them.'"

"I'm not saying there's anything wrong with making sample-based records," he says, "but it gets frustrating when people think I'm just a DJ who makes records based on other people's material."

The pasty-faced New York punker-cum-electronica whiz was the icon who brought techno to the American masses in the '90s. Europe yawned somewhat — they'd been living their lives by BPMs for years. But the American music community, while desperately in need of a

new genre to redeem us from the sin of alterna-gluttony, hadn't yet been able to relate to a two-turntables-and-headphones worldview. Then came Moby.

Back then, he was a born-again Christ child who was meatless, smokeless, boozeless, and peerless in his liberal interpretation of techno/house standards. While grunge rockers bludgeoned America with merciless air raids of fuzz, the Napoleon sized Moby released his eponymous album in 1992, containing a little ditty called "Go" which sampled the avant-yuck cathode cult *Twin Peaks* and laid it over a pompous kick drum bedrock. He spent his initial years building a notoriety in the electronic dance scene. Then, once America had finally taken notice, Moby returned to his punk roots and released thrashing noise assaults that used electronica only as a calling card. Those sold on the big backbeat scratched their heads at this seemingly uncharacteristic move.

In reality, Moby's always had a few strands

of punk DNA, having spent years in the New York hardcore scene, even filling in on vocals at one time for punk stalwarts, Flipper, while their singer did jail time. "My voice is sort of designed for [punk]," he explains. "I can scream at the top of my lungs with the best of them. But I never thought of myself as a singer. I still don't. I sing on a lot of the songs on *Play*, and I sing a lot live, but mainly because I enjoy it. I don't have any aspirations to become a great singer."

Though driven by punk's furious speed, he claims hearing Donna Summer in 1978 planted an electronic/disco seed that never died. "I also really liked Adam Ant, OMD, and the Psychedelic Furs," he says. "I wasn't only into hardcore punk."

Naturally, the wide net of electronica lured him in — a



BY TROY JOHNSON

playing field where all of his hard/soft proclivities could be indulged. Moby's success, you could say, is based on a failure to differentiate: "I never made distinctions between different types of music," he explains. "New Order being a perfect example. I really liked New Order, but I never thought of them as an electronic band."

When he left the indie label, Instinct, and signed with Elektra in 1995, many in the thou-shalt-not-leave-the-underground world of electronica viewed him as a sell-out (even though his early record sales proved otherwise). After two unspectacular albums, however, Moby and Elektra parted ways.

When shopping Play to other labels, he got the cold shoulder — from Universal, RCA, MCA, Virgin, Astralwerks, Sony, and Maverick. Finally, London-based V2 picked it up and, after releasing the singles "Bodyrock," "Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad?," "Natural Blues," and the currently omnipresent "Porcelain," it was clear to the label that their gamble had paid off huge.

"The way labels work nowadays, the presidents and CEOs tell their A&R guys, 'Yeah, you may like the record, but go check out Soundscan [the music industry's sales tracker] and see how many records his last album sold,'" explains V2 publicist Sandy Sawotka.

The woman mainly responsible for taking the risk

was Kate Hyman, Vice President of A&R. "I don't even read Billboard. I'm kind of a purist. If I like the record, I'll sign it," she says of her decision to support Play. "I think it's the most annoying thing when you want to sign somebody and someone asks, 'Well, how did he scan with his last record?' How relevant is that when this isn't their last record I'm bringing to you?"

When you combine two well-defined styles, the result can often be a non-entity — a sort of "neither" art — with as much confidence as a shoulder shrug. Fusion jazz has often suffered from such ambiguity. But Moby's tasteful piano melodies and ethereal electro-ambient orchestrations over beds of classic black folk music redeem Play. The gospel blues-based vocals sampled on Play were mainly culled from the Sounds of the South box set, a 1959 collection of classic black music compiled by historian, Alan Lomax. Instead of using the samples as jarring snippets to support his own vision, Moby allowed the old vocal tracks to become characters of their own. His vocals on the record come off as Moby-as-medium for the specters of blues history. The result of this interplay is a kind of electronic shamanism that is larger than both its creator and the voices that fill it.

"I wanted to make a nice record," he explains. "I wanted to make an eclectic, emotional, and at times beautiful record. There's an old African vocal sample on ['Porcelain'] and the rest of it is me singing. There's a little snippet in the middle of a friend of mine singing a melodic line... there's no academic or analytical inspiration behind what I do."

Even in the electro-snobbish European market, Play has sold over 800,000 units, and U.S. sales are platinum-plus (over a million copies). Moby was nominated for two Grammys — for Best Rock Instrumental Performance and Best Alternative Music Performance (he won neither, bowing to Beck for the latter). Even National Public Radio has recognized Play's astonishing beauty, nominating the album as one of the "300 most important

"I can scream at the top of my lungs with the best of them. But I never thought of myself as a singer. I still don't. I sing on a lot of the songs on Play, and I sing a lot live, but mainly because I enjoy it. I don't have any aspirations to become a great singer."

American musical works of the 20th century."

On the heels of the album's success, the once-shy techno icon/whipping boy is stirring up controversy and flaunting a bit of long-suppressed mischief. He's been known to wave his penis a bit, don hideous '70s leisure suits, and gallivant like a horny teenager let loose at the spread legs of celebrity. Play continues to gain altitude, throwing off a seemingly endless stream of singles, and even — gasp! — car commercials.

"For better or worse, I don't own [my music]," he says of the commercialization of his work. "It's akin to an architect building a house -- you can make a house for someone and, even though it's got your name on it, they own it. So once I deliver a house to the record company, they own it."

Hawking goods or hawking a fusion of past and present, this pretentious little twit now owns more intangible products: fame, fortune, and sonic revelation.

BQ

Troy Johnson is a writer and interviewer. We know, because he wrote this interview. Check out his bio online at:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/others/johnsontroy.htm>

GOING OUT TO THOUSANDS

**An Interview
with Internet
Columnist
and Mailing
List Mogul**

RANDY CASSINGHAM

**by
David M. Fitzpatrick**



EXTRA!

This Is True

Someday, January 32, 2001 - Circulation: Unlimited - Cost: \$Free

BOULDER, Colorado (BQ) We often think of music, books, art, and movies as being the avenues where people challenge what society perceives as the "norm" — what we at *Brutarian* consider to be "brutarian": raw art, as it were. But there are plenty of other corridors for that sort of thing, and as I am fond of pointing out, nothing represents raw art better than the Internet.

Robert L. Ripley once challenged us to "Believe It Or Not," and while many did and many didn't, nearly all were amazed, enthralled, and entertained. What Ripley didn't find while scouring the world over, it found him in the form of mail sent to him from virtually every inhabited corner of the globe.

Robert Ripley is dead, but Ripley's Believe It Or Not rolls onward like an unstoppable juggernaut of the bizarre and the outré. Following it have been other attempts to amaze and bewilder; many successful, some not. Books abound, a museum near the Space Coast in Florida draws hordes of amazement-seekers. Other feel-alikes, like the Baltimore Dime Museum (*Brutarian* #31), keep attentions grabbed and imaginations sparked.

But in the modern age of information sharing and the Internet, there are boundless ways to stimulate the mind. A man named Randy Cassingham figured out a few years back that one of the most entertaining modes of mind-sparking comes from something we've had around for quite some time, but which is now much more easily accessible: news wires. You see them every day in your local newspapers — stories from the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, and others. News wire services are how local papers get news stories from around the world; it's been like that this entire century (the Associated Press, for example, has been around since 1848). Now, imagine all the stories that go out across the wires that you never see. Chances are, Randy Cassingham sees them.

And he saw them, all right, a few years back, and THIS is TRUE was born. TRUE (as it is affectionately abbreviated by Randy) is a collection of weekly wire stories, completely rewritten by Randy and doled out to his faithful following by way of a mailing list. In case you're new to this email thing, a mailing list is a service regular folks like you and I join by adding our email addresses to the mix. When the list owner sends out email to the list, it is then automatically distributed to the many subscribers. This is a hell of a lot easier than Randy typing out everyone's email addresses every week, since he has something in the neighborhood of 150,000 addresses to which TRUE gets emailed.

Mailing lists aren't new. In fact, in Internet terms, they're older than dirt. And they're everywhere! If you're online, you've no doubt become familiar with at least a dozen regular "humor" mailing lists like Top 5 or Joke-A-Day, among myriad others. So what makes TRUE so different?

Randy rewrites and summarizes his stories, adding at the end his trademark humorous tagline; trust me, there's no explaining them away. Subscribe to the list and you'll see. Included in each regular mailing of TRUE is also a nice feature called "Honorary Unsubscribe," where Randy honors someone who has recently

passed, a name with which you might not be familiar but darn well should be. This, in fact, sparked a secondary list Randy runs called HeroicStories (he figured people could be honored *without* having to die, and that seems more than reasonable to me).

But I digress; or, rather, there's so much to TRUE that summing it up just makes my fingers dance like crazy trying to get it all in some sort of order. The subject matter of the news stories isn't something easily categorized, but suffice to say, you'll likely have the impression that you should be slapping your face after reading most of them (or at least after one of Randy's clever taglines which often follow them). Whether gut-bustingly funny, merely a chuckle, a "blink-blink, jaw-drop" bit, or simply something making you stop and think, the best thing about the content in TRUE is one simple, basic fact: they're all for real.

And so is Randy. He attended a rich, Silicon Valley junior high school in 1972, where computers first captured his interest. Having been online continuously since 1982 (yes, folks, there was "online" long before the World Wide Web hit in the early 90s) and, as a result, he's intimately familiar with the "online culture" — and I use that word advisedly," he says. "You *must* understand the culture to succeed online; there's a word for those who don't understand it and throw money into their online presence anyway: 'bankrupt.'"

A journalism school grad, Randy first learned the ins and outs of networking computers during a ten year stint at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Here he not only honed his publishing skills but also was a software engineer for a network-distributed client-server information system — okay, okay, no more boring you with the tech stuff; we can agree at this point that the man isn't a newbie and not just some guy who bought his first computer last year and decided to put up a mailing list.

I've been a member of THIS is TRUE for a couple of years now, and amongst the blizzard of emails which beleaguer me and my email boxes every week, this is one I look forward to rather excitedly. The list is free — that's the best part! — although you can opt to subscribe to a pay-for list which you get before the rest of us get it, contains more new stories than the free version, and doesn't contain any advertisements (relax, they're barely obtrusive, and usually very interesting, enough so to be worth clicking on). On occasion I've traded emails with Randy, usually poking good-natured fun at something he had said. Not by a long shot have we been best e-buddies, but over those few emails (along with years of TRUE mailings with Randy's personal commentary) I've certainly gotten a handle on what sort of a guy he is.

Randy was more than happy to do this interview, which was conducted in a way the rest of the *Brutarian* staff found quite alien — conducted via email. For onliners like Randy and myself, it seemed like the most logical way to do it; saved on phone calls, nobody had to travel to meet anyone else, and with Randy typing roughly twelve thousand words per minute on his Dvorak keyboard, it was a lot faster. Read on...



them; I just figured out how to make a career out of them.

BRUT: We know that TRUE is a collection of true stories you have rewritten from facts garnered off news wires, but TRUE is clearly more than that. If you had to explain to a philosopher or an archeologist a thousand years from now about what TRUE is representative of to today's culture, how would you do it?

RC: First, I think it'd be cool to still be there to explain it to her, but I know what you mean. TRUE's obvious purpose is to entertain, but it indeed goes deeper than that. In essence, I write about the most stupid things people do all over the world, yet they are often things that real people can relate to. Like today, I wrote about a drunk driver that got pulled over by the cops. Who hasn't thought of the scam of quick, let's switch seats with the passenger! But naturally, the passenger was drunk too, *and* the cop saw them switch, so because he saw both in control of the vehicle on the street, *both* of them got popped for drunk driving! It isn't just the sweet justice aspect, but people are able to point at that kind of behavior and think to themselves, "I'm not *THAT* stupid!" It validates that the kinds of stupid things they do are either quite common, or not as bad as what *OTHER* people do. There's deep satisfaction in that. Then to top it off, they get the laugh, or the expression of irony, or outrage, that I add at the end that sets TRUE apart from the several other weird news columns out there — my commentary on the story.

BRUT: When did you launch TRUE?

RC: The summer of 1994. The concept hit me like a bolt of lightning — I literally leapt out of bed with the idea fully formed in my mind.

BRUT: Describe that moment.

RC: Back in 1983 or so, when the IBM PC was really starting to take off, a friend said to me, "Isn't it amazing how much computer power is going onto people's desktops?" I replied "No: the power will come when they're all linked together." So when I saw it all really starting to happen in the early 1990s, I wanted to be a true part of it.

TRUE itself was born out of several desires. I wanted a creative outlet and to write more. I wanted to create intellectual property — something with a long shelf life that would give me "residual" income

over many years. TRUE was designed to be timeless, so book collections could sell for years and years (five have been published, and the sixth is about to go to press). I wanted to create something popular because I wanted just a little bit of fame (I had previously written an esoteric technical book that drew a very limited audience). I wanted to be my own boss. I wanted a portable job — one that I could do anywhere. On the road? On vacation? Perhaps on a cruise ship? How about in Europe? I believe this will be easier and easier to do with the Internet as time goes on.

So one night in June, 1994, I couldn't sleep because L.A. was in the middle of a nasty heat wave, and I didn't have air conditioning. Very suddenly, I saw how to put all my wants together *and* become a part of the Internet explosion. I leapt out of bed, booted my computer, and started taking notes. My mind reeled, and the next day I sketched it all out for a friend. "You're going to make money giving it away for free?" He couldn't see it, even though it's *exactly* the same thing that the TV networks do: they give away entertainment for free, yet make huge amounts of money. I told him I thought I'd be able to quit my job in two years and do just that full time. He kind of went "Uh huh," but two years almost to the day later, I did quit my job and moved out of L.A.

BRUT: TRUE is currently distributed to over 150,000 readers in 183 countries, very impressive numbers. When you set out to do TRUE, did have hopes or dreams of that many subscribers?

RC: I knew it would be big from the start, but I didn't realize just how *fast* it would grow. I had 10,000 subscribers within four months, and remember that was in 1994, the Dark Ages of the Internet. I didn't stop to think quite so much about the international aspect, though — I didn't know there *were* 183 countries, let alone think that in a few years people in that many countries would be reading my work every week!

BRUT: 150,000 subscribers... how many of those are Premium subscribers and get the oversized version early every week?

RC: It's around 157,000 currently, not counting the Premium — paid — subscribers, some portion of which also get the free edition. I don't actually reveal the paid number, but it's in the thousands, in part because it's pretty cheap, so more people renew than not when their year is up.

RANDY CASSINGHAM: Interesting question. Without trying to sound Clintonesque, I guess it depends on your definition of "fringe." The stories come from "legit mainstream" newspapers, but my selection of what to cover certainly ain't "mainstream". I generally don't do the Big Stories that you hear about as front page news — people are sick of them by the time I could do anything with them. OJ Simpson, Princess Di's (or Prince JFK Jr's) deaths, or (shudder!) Elian, for instance. So yeah: in a sense, it is fringe, but it's also familiar and comfortable, because they're the stories that when you do see them, you cut them out and put up on your bulletin board at work, like a good cartoon. The classic "they did WHAT?!" kind of stories. We've all seen

BRUT: Now this wasn't your initial area of expertise, or at least not your career path. You used to work for NASA. What can you tell us about that?

RC: I have a degree in journalism, and my specialty was science — explaining complex topics to a lay audience. After college, I started at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab in Pasadena as a technical writer, and ended up publishing a technical journal for them. When that project ran out of money, I ended up doing software engineering. I was doing pretty well after ten years there, but I really hated Los Angeles and wanted out. I did have the habit of posting the "weird news" items I saw on my bulletin board, and it was a hit, so that became the "content" when my online publishing brainstorm hit.

BRUT: You've said that you're making a more comfortable living now working full-time online, but when you first started the list I'm sure you didn't expect it to explode like this. What makes a guy give up a job with NASA to send out emails all the time? Not that that isn't my dream job, because it is! But what made you say, "Hey, I think I'll do this?"

RC: I like to look at the Big Picture. Yeah, I took a major pay cut when I quit my Day Job, but I had two years of growth under my belt, and I could see where the trend was going. Also, since I was working 50 hours per week at the Day Job, and then going home and working nights and weekends on the new gig, I didn't exactly have much of a social life, so every penny I made went into the bank. I had a nice cushion by the time I left JPL, and I moved to a cheaper place to live, so I figured I had a good two years to make it work "or else." It worked.

BRUT: Obviously, we don't want you to reveal any secret formula, but give me a brief tour of the Life of Randy Cassingham between issues of TRUE... you just sent an issue out yesterday and it's time to start all over again. How do you put the thing together, what do you deal with in the process, what hoops does Murphy's Law make you jump through to make it all come together?

RC: It happens because I work every day. Every day, at least eight hours, and often fourteen. It translates to 70-80 hours per week to get everything done. I write on Sundays, since my contractual deadline for the various newspapers that run

TRUE is first thing Monday morning, and the *last* thing I would ever want to is get up early in the morning. But I need that deadline pressure to make me go through the agony of writing the 7-9 stories I need. It takes anywhere from four to ten hours to do it, finding just the right mix, turning 300- to 900-word stories into a tight 75 words to get the point across in a meaningful, understandable way, and wrap it up between a punchy headline and a smart-ass tagline. But when it's done, I get a feeling like Picasso must have when he put in his last brush stroke and stood back to look. But work isn't all. I do love it, but that's not enough. Because I set my own schedule, I can take time off whenever I want. A working friend wants to get together for lunch? Easy! Except for me, it's breakfast. And when they rush back to work, I stay for dessert with my girlfriend, and then do an errand or two, and amble back to my office two or three hours after I left. I settle into my chair and look at the Rocky Mountains out my window while I download the morning's 100-200 e-mails. Need to jet out to Southern California to speak at a Mensa conference? No problemo: I did that recently, after loading up my laptop and jumping on a plane. It doesn't matter *where* I connect to the Internet, and the column still went out. And while I was there, I took my girlfriend to Disneyland, since she had never been there.

BRUT: What's been the worst problem you've ever encountered with TRUE?

RC: Nothing I can think of, save the relentless march of deadlines. Another week, another 7-9 stories. I've never missed a week since July 1994.

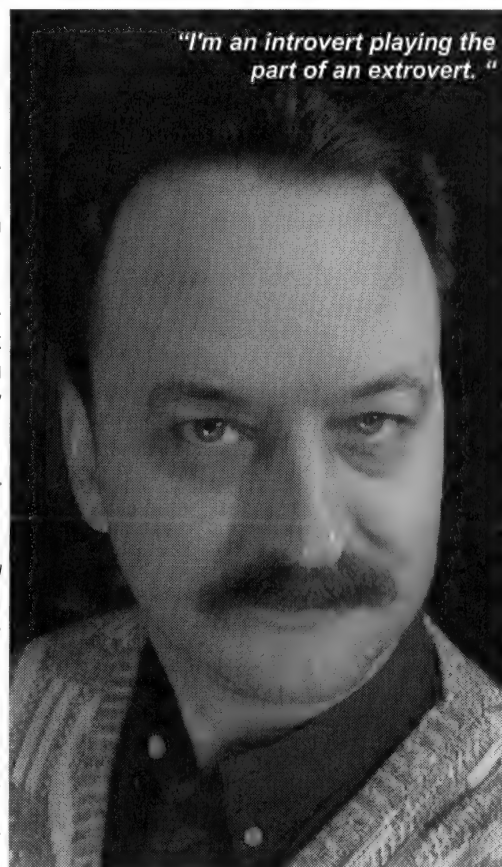
BRUT: Any legal problems ever been presented? Someone claiming copyright violation, someone angry about being embarrassed from their own stupidity making it into TRUE, etc.?

RC: No. First, I understand copyright better than most lawyers do; it's part of my nature to research the hell out of topics I'm interested in, especially if I have a *need* to know. I'm quite careful to NOT violate others' copyrights, and that's fairly easy to do when you understand the nuances of the law. Second, I have two attorneys: one a specialist in intellectual property issues (like copyright), and a firm that does business law. (It also helps that attorneys and cops *really* like TRUE; many of my readers are happy to answer

questions when I have them.) I rarely have to use them, though. And third, I almost never hear from people I've featured in TRUE, even though I *do* name names. But when it does happen, it's really pretty fun: they almost always love that they've been mentioned, and want to know what book collection it will be in so they can buy some copies. At least, that's the way it's happened so far!

BRUT: Doing TRUE and its sister list, HeroicStories, seems to be something of a personal outlet for Randy Cassingham — let me know if I'm wrong on this. Everything from your trademark sarcastic commentary tacked on to the ends of the story to your outspoken opinions on your site. Are you normally outgoing and opinionated, or are you quiet and reserved?

RC: I'm an introvert playing the part of an extrovert. I'm an observer that likes to jump in with an observation, and then sit back down and watch some more. As for my opinions, they're just that: the way I see things. Now and then, that really pisses a segment of the readers off, such as when I took on the editor of a Catholic newspaper for his glee in reporting on an abortion doctor's murder, or rant about how the trend of "zero tolerance" in schools is radically fucking up kids' minds rather than solving the problems the





schools face, or the latest case when a reader said I was going to hell for something I said, and I responded by offering readers "Get Out of Hell Free" cards, which readers went *wild* over. I post the history of all these things on my web site in a "Specials and Rants" section, and include the letters that readers send in. And that's where the magic happens: a few condemn me for my opinion, and when I print those letters they get completely drowned out by letters from readers supporting me. It's incredible how many people really *think* about the issues I raise in what's supposedly just an

"entertainment" column. They understand that I'm *really* doing commentary on the human condition, and they are unbelievably loyal in supporting me, even if what I have to say isn't always pleasant.

BRUT: Ever since Monopoly lost that landmark case way back when someone put out a clone, there have been versions galore. I even have a very old National Lampoon with a Monopoly cheat kit enclosed -- new properties, new Chance and Community Chest cards, etc. Maybe you could branch out with this. GOOHF cards and properties like Tarterus and Hades.

RC: Unlikely: I'm definitely not in the biz of producing parody. I did the GOOHF card because of a specific situation allowed me to trivialize both someone complaining to me *and* the Monopoly concept of getting out of severe trouble for "free." It was just beautiful opportunity for synergy that I couldn't pass up. Still, I *did* register GetOutOfHellFree.com!

BRUT: There's a "Spam Primer" on your site. You're a strong anti-spam individual, yes?

RC: Yes. To say spammers are scum gives them too much legitimacy. They steal from people to deliver junk mail to people that don't want it, or downright hate it, pounding millions of mailboxes in the hopes that one tenth of one percent of

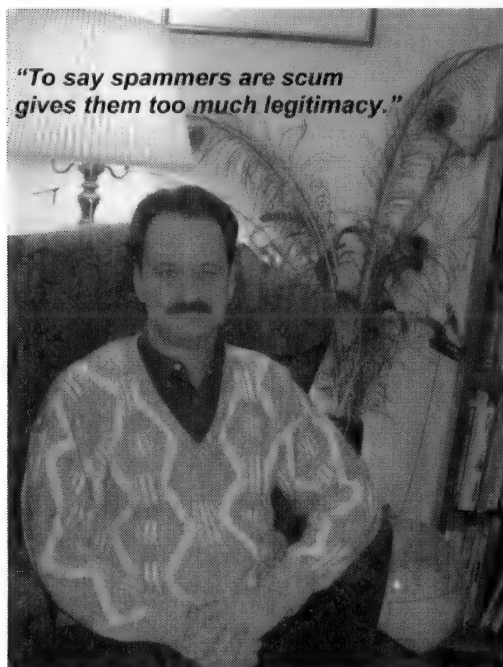
the recipients are stupid enough to send them money for their fraudulent products. The literally don't care about the 99.9 percent of everyone else that are pissed off, or the servers they crash, often in foreign countries where net services have to pay for their bandwidth by the byte. THAT is no way to do business, online or anywhere else. It amazes me that people don't send mail bombs to the bastards' mail drops. I want to, and I'm more stable than a lot of people!

BRUT: There's also a "Dvorak primer." You once upon a time converted to using the Dvorak keyboard layout, which a lot of people actually still haven't heard about. You substantially increased your speed after learning the Dvorak keyboard, right?

RC: Yep. I had topped out at about 55 WPM on Qwerty, and now type at over 100 WPM. I'm a writer; output matters! Not to mention I work at my computer 70-80 hours a week, so I need something *comfortable* to type on. I think the Dvorak layout has saved me from carpal tunnel. But the real shame is that they still teach kids to type on Qwerty, even though it's significantly harder to learn and type on than Dvorak. If schools just switched to teaching Dvorak, they can get the mechanics of typing out of the way quickly, and move on to *why* you teach kids typing: so they can be creative! To write, to program, to explore. With computers, setting whatever layout is trivial; it's no longer a matter of "we have to teach them Qwerty, since all the typewriters are Qwerty." There aren't any typewriters in the real world anymore, folks. Dvorak is built in to Windows, because I convinced Microsoft to put it there. It's as easy as a few mouse clicks.

BRUT: You *convinced* Microsoft to put Dvorak in Windows?

RC: Yep. On a business trip to Seattle, a friend who knew some people at Microsoft used me — building me up as some important author who Wrote The Book about the Dvorak keyboard — as an excuse to get a meeting of some of the Windows developers together. This was when they were working on version 3.0, which is the first version that was truly useful. We convinced them that they *needed* to put Dvorak layouts in, and it's been there since. The funny part is, I offered to beta test that aspect, but they called back later to say that they didn't need me since there were so many Dvorak typists there already. Turns out



that some of their top people are Dvorak converts, which is no big surprise since it simply makes sense to use it.

BRUT: I agree, the Dvorak layout is far easier, but I myself am a weenie about it. Having done this sort of thing for 20 years, I know fully well that I can click-click a few times and change layouts. It's easier than loading a device driver like we used to have to do through DOS. But I never do, and I'm a reasonably intelligent guy. Is there a subconscious fear in us that makes old dogs afraid to learn new tricks, do you think?

RC: Absolutely: people think they have to learn how to type all over again, and they remember how hard it was the first time! Luckily, switching isn't anywhere near as difficult as learning Qwerty the first time. That's because of two main factors: because of how Qwerty is laid out, it's very difficult to learn it in the first place, and two, a significant part of it — the dexterity that your fingers must learn to move around the keyboard — doesn't have to be relearned at all; that part is necessary no matter what layout you use. Still, it was tough for me, as a writer, to suddenly go from 55 wpm (on Qwerty) to a crawl on Dvorak when I first switched, but I'd never go back: I now type at more than 100 wpm on Dvorak which (again, as a writer), is extremely helpful!

BRUT: I promise, in honor of His Trueness, I will haul out Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing and dedicate myself to faster typing. I do about 75 words per minute on a Qwerty. Whaddaya think I could hit on a Dvorak?

RC: Actually, I wouldn't recommend Mavis Beacon for Dvorak since the lessons were not specifically designed for Dvorak. Keytime (in Seattle: www.keytime.com) has tutorials that are Dvorak-specific, however. It's hard to say what speed you'd reach with Dvorak. Even if you didn't increase your speed, though, you'd benefit by less physical strain on your hands and wrists.

BRUT: You know I've asked you this one before, but people are reading now, so: You *really* met Dvorak's wife? Tell me about that!

RC: Yes. She first contacted me when I was writing my book on the Dvorak layout, which is still available via my web site. She had good timing: I had a lot of questions, and she was able to provide

some first-hand knowledge about the keyboard, which was introduced in the 1930s. After my book was published, I drove up to Seattle and gave her a copy. She was about 93, and still sharp as a tack and living alone in the same house she and Dr. Dvorak had bought decades before. She's been dead for some years now, though — this was in 1986.

BRUT: Interesting as meeting Mrs. Dvorak was, I'm not sure if qualifies as a bona fide celebrity... but this is a lucrative business for you. You travel a lot, do interviews like these, do public speaking engagements, etc. Have you had occasion to run into any famous people? If so, who?

RC: I have a lot of famous people who read my stuff, but I protect their privacy, just as I do all my readers, by not revealing their names unless they give me permission to do so. There is one that just about everyone in the computer industry has heard of that not only said it's okay to name him, but he wrote a really nice testimonial which is posted on my site. I won't tell you who it is, but you can read his letter at <http://thisistrue.com/woz.html>.

(*Editor's Note:* And we won't ruin it for you here, either, but the "woz" should tip off you Apple lovers. Definitely worth reading this testimonial.)

BRUT: Who would you like to meet while doing this job that you haven't yet?

RC: Everyone! I recognize a lot of the names of people on my distribution, but since I *do* respect their privacy, I don't write to them and bother them (so I wish they'd come forward and write to *me*!) I can't imagine how many others there are who subscribe with anonymous e-mail addresses, but I indeed can tell by the domain names that every major branch of government, most of the big entertainment (movie/TV/radio/etc.) companies, all the major computer companies, all the major news agencies, and virtually every other sector of The World reads my stuff — including people in Congress and in the White House. I *love* peeking behind the scenes that the public normally doesn't get to see, so I want to meet everyone and have them show me the wizards behind the curtains. In speaking engagements, I've met MacArthur ("genius grant") fellows, Emmy and Pulitzer Prize winners, authors, actors, you name it. I love talking to them as *people*, because that's what they are — not the

"I love talking to them as people, because that's what they are — not the gods some make them out to be."



gods some make them out to be.

BRUT: Hey! If White House personnel subscribe, you could be called as a witness on all those missing emails.

RC: I'll take the Fifth, Dave.

BRUT: Any invitations to the White House for supper?

RC: No, and because I'm happy to skewer anyone in power in my column, I don't think it's going to happen anytime soon. In fact, I can't think of one politician who has sought me out...

BRUT: Dana Carvey used to do his George Bush impression, making fun of the President... and he got invited to the White House for a dinner once. He said he was nervous and when he got there, someone close to Bush asked him to get up and do Bush... he was nervous, but he did it, and Bush laughed his ass off. Who knows, maybe you'll get an invitation. Would you take it if they offered? Would you read some select political pieces that might make the Prez nervous?

RC: Hell yes I would, even if it "wouldn't be prudent!" But I think there's a difference between imitation (aka "the sincerest form of flattery") and specific criticism, so I'm not going to hold my breath waiting for an invite.

BRUT: TRUE is a column detailing true events that are sometimes so bizarre that we wonder if they're true — even though we know they are. You must receive

WHAT is TRUE?

Randy has graciously allowed us greedy access to some of the recent stories that have appeared in TRUE, so you'll get an idea of what it's about.

SAY WHAT? A T-shirt sold by the J.C. Penney Co. said "Wazzzuuup?" on the front. Wazz wrong with that? Well, it's reminiscent of the advertising slogan "Whassup?!" Whass wrong with that? That slogan is used in ads for Budweiser beer. "We want our customers to feel comfortable shopping at our stores," a Penney spokesman said, announcing that the retailer was pulling all the shirts from its shelves. The beer company had nothing to do with the shirt, but Penney's took the action after just one e-mailed complaint from the owner of a 4-year-old. (AP) ...Attention Penney's: I'm offended by your kowtowing to one humorless complaint. Now, what are you going to do about that?

THERE'S A FLAG ON THE PLAY: The parents of Patrick Griffiths, a senior at Mira Costa High School in Torrance, Calif., are demanding that the school strike the 17-year-old boy's recent suspension from his academic record so it won't impede his college career. Griffiths was suspended for two days when he declined to be crowned homecoming king at the homecoming football game because he thinks it's a "meaningless popularity contest". He thus "willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties," said the suspension papers. (Torrance Daily Breeze) ...In college football, that's a mere 10-yard penalty.

FINALLY, A WINNER: Al Gore has won the election ...for district director of the Marion Soil and Water Conservation Board in Salem, Ore. No one ran for the post, so write-ins ruled the day. Gore won with 23 of the 4,570 votes cast, easily beating George W. Bush, who also got some votes. "Voters don't understand what it means when they write in a silly name," said Marion County Clerk Al Davidson. "But it's their right, and it's their tax dollars that pay for it." The Vice President cannot actually take the job, however, since to serve "you have to own or manage land in the zone," Davidson said. Gore actually came in second, but vote winner Donald Duck was disqualified because he's an animated character. (AP) ...Which is something no one has ever said about Gore.

CLOSET CASE: Jeffrey Scott Martin, 26, and a 15-year-old girl in Mt. Vernon, Ohio, met on the Internet seven months ago, police say. But that's not why Martin is in trouble. That happened when he was found living in the girl's bedroom closet, where he had allegedly been hiding for nearly a

story ideas all the time... how often do you send people to urbanlegends.com?

RC: All the time. It's not as bad as it once was, since I posted some submission guidelines on my web site that includes links to sites like urbanlegends.com — and specifically list some of the stories that people have sent me again and again and again, yet never happened. I can just see some newbie get online and get the "hospital cleaner unplugs patient's respirator to plug in vacuum cleaner" story that's been going around for years — and since they just got it in their e-mail, it *must* be true and just happened yesterday, right? — and pop to my web site to see how to submit it to me, and then get blown away when they realize they were duped. Most of the stories never happened. Truth really is stranger than fiction, though, and who needs old stories that have been going around for years when you can get *real* stories fresh every week?

BRUT: Naturally, anyone reading TRUE for any length of time has seen the inevitable bout of ignorance with people who get all righteous on you, like with the whole Y2K debate. Does it happen often?

RC: It's not often, but it does happen, and some of them lead to great stories on my web site, like the guy who absolutely insisted that it was still the 1900s. I mean, HELLO? And when I made fun of him, a few others came to his defense! I figure my readers are pretty much cream of the brain crop, yet now and then, they really do something stupid. But that's okay; not only do I turn the lights on for some of them, it assures me that I'll never, ever, run out of material.

BRUT: Two of my favorite lists had constant problems — HumourNet and especially its risque joke counterpart, BawdyNet. Now you know Vince Sabio and Shawn King of those respective mailers, yes? Is HumourNet even around anymore? There hasn't been one in my mailbox since December 19 of 1999, and no Web site seems to be there. I just tried to subscribe again, but Lyris told me I already was. And BawdyNet I had just about given up on until a couple random mailings trickled in recently. What's up with those guys?

RC: Yes, I know them. Vince quite well. What's "wrong" is that they aren't running commercial operations — they put out

their stuff for fun. The fools actually *work* for a living! As I mentioned, I dispensed with that inconvenience back in 1996, so you can count on your TRUE subscription!

BRUT: So let's go off the whole mailing list discussion now since I know from trading emails with you on many occasions that there is more to Randy Cassingham than his mailing lists, such as his passion for the Dvorak keyboard layout and his anti-spam fight. But you're mostly an online guy, so let's look at several major topics today. Sum it up, in all fairness, what do you think about the whole MP3 battle, with Napster getting their pants kicked and people downloading MP3s like mad?

RC: I have mixed feelings about it all. I think if bands don't want their music online, it shouldn't be there. They wrote it, they put their lives into it, they *own* it, they should be able to control it — simple as that. But the record industry just doesn't Get It. What happened when TV was introduced? The movie industry said it would ruin the movie business. Did that happen? No: it got stronger *because* of TV. The record industry said the cassette tape would ruin the music business. Did that happen? No: it got stronger *because* of cassettes. The movie industry said the introduction of the VCR would ruin the movie business. It created record profits for them. DVDs, same thing. CDs, ditto. And on and on and on. Now we have MP3s, and the record companies are screaming the sky is falling. Give me a break. In a year or two, they'll either be laughing all the way to the bank, or crying in their soup because the musicians used the Internet to cut them off completely and go straight to the audience. Either way, there's nothing they can do about it, so they might as well embrace it.

BRUT: The antitrust trial against Microsoft.

RC: Microsoft has acted like assholes, and turn out some remarkably crappy software (the PC is 20 years old and they *still* can't keep it from crashing daily? Hello?). But Bill Gates' vision is in large part responsible for the richest economy the world has ever seen, and the government wants to put a stop to it? Are they insane? (On the other hand, breaking up AT&T led to a major communications revolution, so who knows what will happen if we break up Microsoft!) We all want our chance at The American Dream and become rich, but if some bastard

succeeds too much, society feeds them to the wolves. Gates dropped out of college and became the richest man on the planet, all by his own luck, vision, and work. A prick, maybe, but he won, and a bunch of damned crybabies just can't take it. Tough shit, get back to work, and don't forget to ask the customers if they want to Super Size their Value Meal, because those 39 cents add up to millions by the end of the day, okay?

BRUT: Free speech on the Internet.

RC: That's not an issue, it's a reality that is leading to one of the biggest social changes in history. We ain't seen nothin' yet, but anyone who says they know what's going to happen is either lying or fooling themselves. They sure as hell aren't fooling those of us that are out here making it work.

BRUT: International regulation of the Internet: what is right, what is wrong, what is feasible, and what will likely never be regulated?

RC: Ever hear of the power of the press? Everyone now owns a printing press. Everyone now has an unbelievable amount of power, but few know what to do with it, or how it works. But they're beginning to learn. It doesn't take millions in venture capital; I financed my operations with pocket money, and people in 183 countries look every week at what I have to say. What non-net author, or publisher, can say that? I'll bet none.

BRUT: You're aware, I'm sure, of the recent ruling by the French Supreme Court against Yahoo! to keep Nazi memorabilia off their site. There are some sticky legal muck-ups with that situation — how to control an internationally-accessible Web site, whether that site can feasibly control who sees what, etc. How could we possibly solve such issues fairly? Doesn't it seem that it should be the responsibility of local governments to control by law what their citizens are doing? I mean, if Nazi memorabilia is illegal in France and Germany, and people in those countries can look at it online, it seems that making it illegal to ship the stuff across their borders ought to cover it a lot more sensibly than hauling Yahoo! into court over it.

RC: There's no point in having laws allow-

ing "free speech" if all the speech was something you wanted to hear. I mean, you don't need a law guaranteeing free speech that everyone likes! I don't think disallowing discussion of uncomfortable matters is any way to stop people from thinking about them. In fact, open debates are much better ways to shut these people up; their ideas don't hold up to cross-examination. What better way to show how stupid some ideas are than to shine a public light on them?

BRUT: Do you play any computer games? If so, what do you like? Either now or five years ago or on a TRS-80.

RC: I usually don't have time for them, but I have a guilty pleasure. Do you remember the 1970s Atari game, Battlezone? It's still around, but the graphics are incredible now, and you don't just go against robot tanks, you can connect to game servers and go head to head against other real people all over the world. It's a major kick-ass fun time, and I can get lost in it for hours — much to the bewilderment of my girlfriend.

BRUT: I must admit that after years of playing video games, my favorite is still Donkey Kong; but I have a terrible weakness for first-person shooters. I don't play often anymore, as I'd get nothing done if I did; but when I do, it's in vicious doses. But the old arcade classics are still the best. Did you get into any other classic games that are being remade, like Frogger and Pac-Man? What do you think of all the remakes nowadays?

RC: The remakes I've seen usually miss the point of the original games. Pac-Man was already brilliant in its original incarnation. There's nothing to improve, save perhaps adding additional levels. It's why I like Battlezone; they put a story behind the game and beefed up the graphics (and, yeah, added the ability to play others over the 'net!), but the original concept is still visible.

BRUT: Back into mailing list gear: years of regular TRUE mailings, Premium subscribers making you the Rockefeller of the online world, five books of TRUE material selling strong... where do you see TRUE going from here?

RC: First, more of the same. As income grows, I'm hiring others to do the things that must be done, but don't add to the creation of the content (like entering the

month. Police found Martin has been AWOL from an army base in Kentucky for about two months. In addition, police found military weapons and dynamite in his truck, parked near the girl's house, and a charge of child pornography may be pending too: a naked photo of the girl was found in the closet. "You would think that most people would discover this sometime before this," a police spokesman said. "But how often does a parent check a child's closet?" (AP) ...Starting now, approximately daily.

READ A STORY, TAKE A PILL: A "tongue-in-cheek study" by pediatricians at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, says that the characters in the Winnie the Pooh books can be diagnosed as "seriously troubled individuals" if their behaviors are weighed against the psychiatric criteria listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV. The study, published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal, notes that "Pooh needs intervention. We feel drugs are in order" for his attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and obsessive-compulsive tendencies. Piglet "clearly suffers from a generalized anxiety disorder" and is in need of an anti-panic drug, and Eeyore needs an anti-depressant so he can "see the humour in the whole tail-losing episode." Even Christopher Robin "could develop gender identity issues" and may have trouble after spending so much time talking to animals. However, "I would also remind people that we are kidding around," said lead researcher Sarah Shea. (Reuters) ... Taking kidding to such extremes as publishing them in a peer-reviewed medical journal sounds a bit pathological.

RISE IN THE POLLS: Romania's National Liberal Party is hoping to attract more youthful voters by giving away free condoms imprinted with the party's slogan: "Strong as iron, as quick as an arrow." (AFP) ...So now we're left to wonder if the condom took the slogan from the party, or the party took the slogan from the condom.

GOING POSTAL: A Bangor, Maine man made a bad decision after spending four solid weeks of laying out a magazine. David Fitzpatrick, 31, had just spent an inordinate amount of time working on Brutarian Quarterly's Issue #32 and had been pronouncing to his friends that he was going to "have a beer and celebrate" the completion. Evidently, in a mug was not the kind of beer he had in mind. Fitzpatrick dived into a vat at the Sea Dog microbrewery screaming unknown phrases in Irish Gaelic as he submerged and surfaced over and over. Brewers at the Sea Dog hauled him out and yelled it him how dangerous his act was. (AP) ... "Not at all," Fitzpatrick replied. "It's drownproof: the deeper you go, the higher you get!"

Hey... wait a minute...

orders for books, and shipping them out). More and more TV producers have been sniffing around, but so far none have been able to really "get it" — that is, understand that what makes TRUE powerful is that it makes people *think* and doesn't insult their intelligence. All they want to do is try to come up with the new *Laverne and Shirley*, and that kind of mentality led NBC to its lowest ratings ever last quarter. But someday, someone is going to catch on. And when they do realize the power, I'm ready: I have my own sitcom idea!

BRUT: You have a lot of speaking engagements and do a fair amount of traveling for such. Do you have an agent?

RC: No, I let the web take care of that. I have a page that shows upcoming gigs, and a couple of transcripts of past talks, so organizations can judge for themselves. One interesting trend I've noticed is that I'm being brought in less for pure entertainment and more for staff training on how the *heck* the company can make better use of their presence online. That is, they're now understanding that just having a web site isn't enough to keep them ahead of their competition, and "now what?" I do seem to have a lot of ideas about that...!

BRUT: What's the most widely-seen or -heard interview or speaking engagement you've done? Anything really up there like the Today Show or Oprah or whatnot?

RC: It's probably a toss-up between the CNN Morning News and a gigantic personality profile by the Los Angeles Times that got syndicated to a bunch of other papers. I was shocked by how big and glowing that profile was, not to mention the 8x10 color portrait they ran with it! I was rather flattered.

BRUT: Any interest in that sort of circuit?

RC: I'm assuming you mean lecture circuit; yes and no. Yes, in that I like the variety, I like to travel, and I love the audience response. But no in that I hate the disruption to my schedule. I've found that even though my fees are slowly going up, the invitations aren't slowing down. I solved that by getting more selective in what I accept.

BRUT: Actually, I was referring to the talk show circuit.

RC: Sure: everyone in the biz likes the publicity, and I've done everything that's been offered to me, but I've never really sought out the spotlight. I've never even had a publicist. I'm just a guy pounding out news commentary — that has managed to attract a huge audience all over the world. It's pretty much the New American Dream: by cutting out the middleman, I can reach my audience directly and make my living online. All in all, not bad.

BRUT: And the big question, of course: You wanna do Jerry Springer, don't you? "I Sent False News Wire Stories to My Internet Columnist" or something like that.

RC: I don't think Springer would want me, since I've savaged him in my column a few times (not like he's not used to that by now!) I'd of course love to do Letterman or Leno, because of their huge audiences, but they're so geared these days to people plugging movies that I don't think they're interested in *talking* anymore. They're more get on, give some sort of pre-rehearsed story about the kids to show the audience you are a normal human (hah!), show the clip, and split. BORING! I like the old Carson shows, where a guest would be there for ten minutes (or more!) to *talk* about something of interest. Amazingly, the last time I watched Rosie O'Donnell (a few years ago), she was still doing that. So there, I said it: I'd like to be on the Rosie show. Montel Williams would be great too; he strikes me as a very thoughtful, and thought-provoking, man.

BRUT: What do you think of these trash TV shows, while we're on the subject? I bitch and complain about Springer all the time, but I can't help but watch. I keep digging in my brain to figure out if these people are really for real — which would, frighteningly enough, give it the same feel as TRUE as far as "truth is stranger than fiction," or if they're just paid to act it out, which would make it kinda like professional (urk!) wrestling.

RC: I don't watch Springer, in part because I am sure that so many of the people on are actors. I don't have much interest in invented arguments; I'd much rather listen to intelligent people talk about interesting things. Politically Incorrect would be a hoot, for instance.

BRUT: Tell us about TRUE's sister list, HeroicStories.

RC: Where TRUE illuminates the human condition by pointing out the stupidity of others, HS gives a glimmer of hope by pointing out that really, most of the inhabitants of the planet are really very cool, good people. I get mail all the time, from men and women alike, openly admitting that some of the stories make them cry because they are so wowed by what real people are doing out there. It's really a cool balance — the Ancient Greeks knew full well the incredible power of combining laughter and tears, and that lesson is not lost on me.

BRUT: Where do you see Randy Cassingham going from here?

RC: What more could I want? But we'll see what comes up.

BRUT: You know, there's a running joke with Dom Salemi, my editor, whenever he conducts an interview with girly rock bands, he tells them that the least they could do is provide him with some used panties. A lot of them do, believe it or not. So if you could be equated to a girly rock band — for analogy's sake, not to insult you in any way — what would we claim you should provide us with? Used newspaper? What would be a good analogy? You know, as in "Girl rock bands are to used panties as Randy Cassingham is to _____."

RC: It has to be intangible: a glimmer of hope. I can't compete with sweaty panties, but I can help make you think. Thinking can lead you anywhere: get out your chemistry set, and maybe you can come up with *eau de panty* and make billions.

BQ

If you want to learn more about Randy Cassingham, subscribe to THIS is TRUE and/or HeroicStories, order any of his TRUE books, or acquire your "Get Out of Hell Free" cards, visit him at:

<http://www.thisistrue.com>

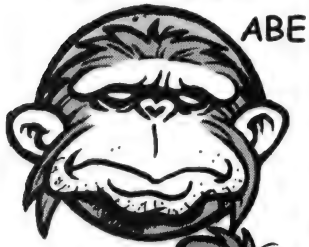
(Word has it Randy is also promoting a humor mailing list — but he promises it's not only well-filtered, but free.)

David "Indy" Fitzpatrick is a Brutarian staff writer.

Check out his bio at:
<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbfq/fitzpatrickdavid.htm>

THE THINKING APE BLUES by Mark Poutenis

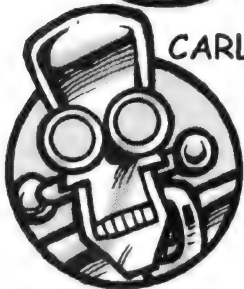
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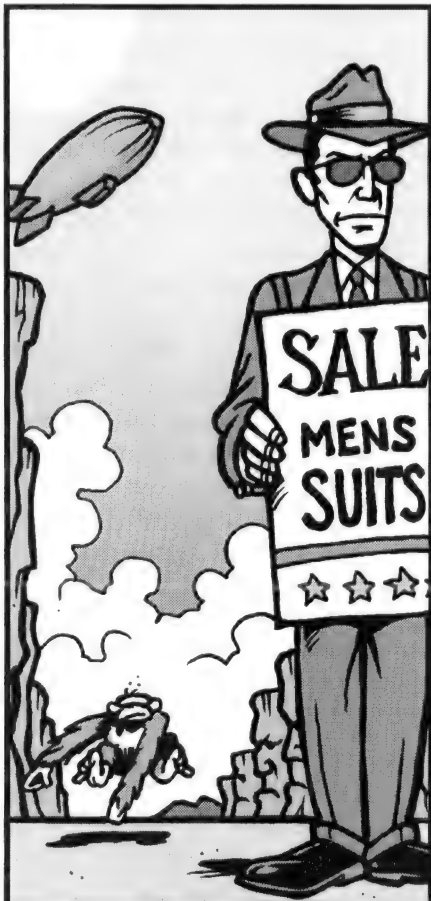
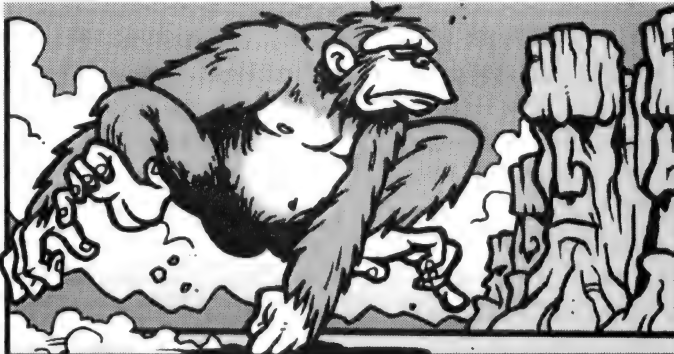
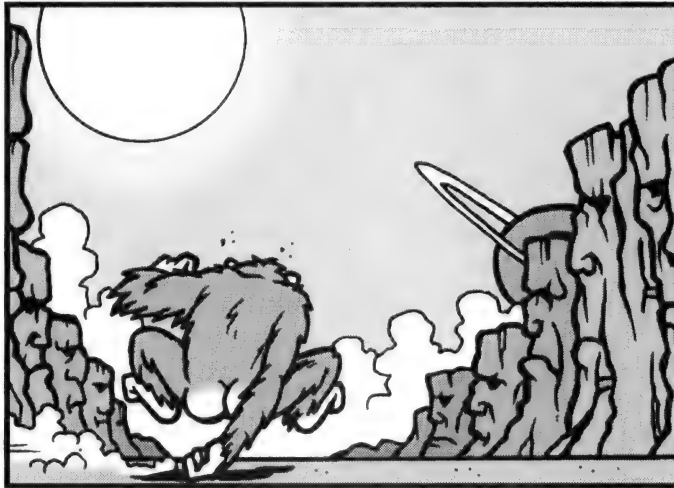
ABE



BEN



CARL



Do I really look like
your target audience?

Hey pal,
I just hand
'em out.



Wayne Coyne has been representing Flaming Lips since 1984. That year a bunch of Norman, OK, college dudes started Lovely Sorts of Death records to issue their eponymous album of raw distorted psychedelia. (Restless still offers a selection of early rarities on *The Flaming Lips 1984-1990*.) Skip to 1999. *The Soft Bulletin* comes out on Warner Brothers records. The anger that kicked out of "I Want My Own Planet" has been tamed and a busy, clean pop sound emerges. But even on that first album, there was a drive toward pulling in unexpected sounds and arrangements. For Coyne, this experimental tendency has only expanded with age. First there were the Parking Lot and Boom Box experiments, where he orchestrated large groups of folks to play multiple tape decks from their cars or portable stereos. Somehow Coyne snuck his 4-CD brainchild *Zaireeka* past Warner accountants to represent this multiple sound source concept on a set of his own songs; if you knew three other people with boom boxes, you could play all 4 discs consecutively to get the big picture. Then comes *The Soft Bulletin*, which owes more to Esquivel's talents of arranging millions of strange sounds than to Pink Floyd or the Electric Prune's early aggressive psyche-outs. In terms of volume, Coyne's come a long way; but he's still the same mad scientist of sound refining his experimental methods, aiming to get the most from his madness.

BRUT: You're doing this big package tour, the International Music Against Brain Degeneration Revue. It sounds like a benefit for hemispherectomy patients.

WAYNE COYNE: Right, people have asked me that--are you giving the money to brain research? And I say "No, we're keeping it for our own research!"

BRUT: Is this your take on Lollapalooza?

COYNE: Not really. This isn't even a reaction against that. It's just something that we wanted to do, and of course you can use all these other ones as ex-

amples, the WARP and the Horde and all that. I think people really like those type of shows; I think they like the identity that a tour provides for them. They can say "Oh, I like this band a little bit, I like that band a little bit," and usually there's one band that draws everybody there and they just put up with the other bands. It can have a theme or identity, and I like that about it. I'm not really sure if it's because of Lollapalooza or those other things, because I'm not really sure what the identity is with some of those.

BRUT: What's the theme of your tour?

COYNE: The theme of our tour is that it's music that I like.

BRUT: That's how you picked these particular people?

COYNE: Yeah. And it wouldn't be just exclusively these people. There would probably be a thousand people that I could ask and hope that they could do it. I'd ask people like David Bowie to come along--and he'd say "No!" But it's basically stuff that we really liked, and a lot of people we know a lot of these bands, so it isn't as though we think "Wouldn't it be nice--but these people are arrogant assholes and they wouldn't be any fun to be around." All the people that we would pick to tour with would be lovely human beings to begin with, and then they would make--to our ears anyway--marvelous music.

BRUT: Have you played with any of these people before?

COYNE: I've played with Lou Barlow when he was in Dinosaur Jr. a couple times; they stayed at my house. But as Sebadoh, I've never played with them, even though we've played festivals and things like that where we had played and they had played, and we would see them later on. But never on the same stage together as Sebadoh. So that was kind of fun. And Sonic Boom, of Spacemen 3 and Spectrum fame, he's come to a bunch of our

That Wouldn't Die

Mad Scientist of Sound

Wayne Coyne

Keeps the Rock Alive

shows and we've talked, and we know each other, but we've never shared the stage together. So that's cool.

BRUT: He's not listed for the DC show.

COYNE: Yeah, he leaves on the 11th, unfortunately. He's a really awesome element of the show. By the time we get to you it should be Cornelius. That should be good as well. We met those guys--it's been a couple of months now--but they did a festival in England put on by Belle and Sebastian. We saw them and how they presented themselves, and we talked to them as best as we could. But they speak no English and I unfortunately speak no Japanese, so there's a little room for error there. They seem very enthusiastic and liked the idea of the tour we were doing and wanted to be on it. So we worked it out so they could be on it, even though it's only 10 or 11 shows right there at the end. I really like his record and the whole way he goes about doing his show incorporating samples and video and stuff. It's not that far removed from some of the ideas that we do. I think that show will be just as powerful as the ones we're doing without them.

BRUT: Are you a longtime Robyn Hitchcock fan?

COYNE: Not necessarily. I like Robyn, but I don't necessarily follow him record for record. I like what he does, but what he does, I feel he does every record. I don't feel like he's necessarily evolved or changed his sound.

BRUT: But you still wanted him on the tour.

COYNE: Well, he is a funny, and I must admit a--witty hardly describes it--almost genius with his wordplay that he does in his songs. Even though it's cloaked in a jokey kind of way, underneath all of that is some amazing storytelling. I think that comes

through a lot on the way he presents his show, at least on this tour anyway, cause he's not playing with a band. He talks about the songs, and he's funny, he's charming, and then he plays the songs, and his songs are funny and charming. So his 35-40 minutes up there. At the moment he's following Sonic Boom, which is this onslaught of electronic, what can you say? Bombast would be the best way to describe it. Then Robyn follows with this plaintive, real personal, sometimes even comedy type stuff. So it's a real variety. And we like Robyn a lot. We met him a couple months ago when he came to one of our shows, and we talked to him about coming on tour with us. He liked the way we presented our show--we weren't real cynical or confrontational, we just present songs. I think when he saw us in England, he said "I could play with you guys and not feel out of my league." Cause he's older and a lot of the people are going to be younger. I think it works out. I mean, our schedule is hectic and Robyn is not used to such get up early, drive, play kind of mentality. But he will be. By the time we get to DC he'll be in real trooper conditioning.

BRUT: *Soft Bulletin* is your ninth album? Have you been counting?

COYNE: You know, I'm not sure. You could be absolutely right.

BRUT: You guys are survivors.

COYNE: Well, I don't think it was by design. I think we just get lucky. We find ourselves put in that category, but honestly it wasn't through anything we did per se. When we make records, we always think, "This is the last one they'll let us get away with."

BRUT: It's funny that you say that, cause I'm dying to know how you conned Warner Brothers into releas-

By Jeff Bagato

ing *Zaireeka*. Four CDs!

COYNE: I don't think it really is a con. In the big picture, they're not fools, and they know what we do. And they obviously can hear our music a long time before they put it out. So if it came down to having to con them, I don't think they could be conned. I honestly think they really do believe in us. I mean, I know they believe in us. Sometimes I think I confuse people because of what we do musically, people assume I must be some drug addict or eccentric weird-o, or whatever.

BRUT: That's in the past.

COYNE: But I really am not. I really try my best—I realize that being on Warner Brothers is a rare opportunity, especially with as much money and power as they can wield in the music industry. And I don't take it lightly. When I approach a project, I think that they do trust us. Honestly, they never flinched; they said, "We know, Wayne, we sort of know what you're about and we've seen you working up to this." When I did finally approach them about how much I thought it would cost, how much time it would take, and the way I wanted to do the whole thing, I mean, they barely looked up from their desk and said "OK, we know that it'll be good, and see you later." That is the relationship that people should have with record companies. It's about making money, it's a business. And the art side should be saved for the fans, who want the art, and the business side should be saved for the record company that wants to make money. I think that if we do it right—I'm not a marketing person, but I understand the way the market works, and even the way we marketed *Zaireeka*, it actually made quite a bit of money, and it still continues to make money. So it wasn't as if they were on vacation and then they came back and we'd put it out. They wanted it put out.

BRUT: I was afraid that was going to be like the Hampton Grease Band album of the 90s, where it's this massive project that never sells anything. When I got *Zaireeka*, I just laughed, wondering how you got away with that. That's great that it worked out.

COYNE: It's not to say that it wasn't difficult, but it wasn't necessarily difficult to convince Warner Brothers, mostly it was difficult to make sure that it would actually work and I wouldn't look like a fool. So if I do my homework right, when I present this stuff to them that they do take it seriously. And they want me to follow my muse. I think that's the best thing that people, artists especially, can do. It's not the battle of commerce versus art that you think. They want to make money, and I want them to make money, and of course if they make money I make money; so we're all working at the same thing together. They realize that not everybody's gonna put

out Madonna records. I mean, they signed us; they know the kind of music we want to present. At the moment they actually like it. But I can see when *Zaireeka* was put out, the state that even their own record company was in was pretty hazardous for people trying to be adventurous. But that's the way it is. I mean, the market's always changing, and that's why it's risky to be ambitious. Sometimes I'm wanting to be ambitious and they just want to pay the bills.

BRUT: You've come a long way since "I Want My Own Planet."

COYNE: Well, I don't know where I've come, but I've come a long ways, you're right.

BRUT: I was listening to that last night and trying to compare past stuff to the new record, and think about the way the sound has changed.

COYNE: We did that record in 1984 and this is 1999. And sometimes I think, that's how low standards of judgment on bands has gotten, because sometimes there's so little—

BRUT: Continuity for one thing.

COYNE: I think with us, because we've been around for a long time, you can see that we go from one thing to the next, but there are threads of things where you could say "I could see they were headed in that direction."

BRUT: Definitely. I was listening to *Oh My Gawd*, and I was thinking that was not far at all from what you're doing right now.

COYNE: When we put out *Oh My Gawd* and we had that piano track "Love Your Brain" at the end of that, people wanted to beat us up. They thought "what kind of wussies are you? You guys listening to Elton John or something?" and we said "Yeah, we do. We listen to everything." We like music. We don't draw a line in the sand and say we listen to these bands, we don't listen to these bands. We listen to good music whether it's made by Elton John or whether it's made by Ornette Coleman or whether it's made by Fugazi. We don't actually care who makes it as long as we like it. And that's always been the case. So when people are surprised that we'll attempt things, I'm surprised that they don't expect that we should. We like music; it seems like we would eventually want to explore all aspects of it and see what it can do for us and what we can do for it.

BRUT: What records were you listening to that influenced *The Soft Bulletin*?

COYNE: Well, I think *The Soft Bulletin* is more an accumulation of the things that we tried to do and our successes and failures of the *Zaireeka* record, honestly. I think we're more influenced by the process of recording and the recording studio and the events in our own lives than we were by listening to anybody else's music. Because by the time we

started to do even the beginning of *Zaireeka*, we were already carrying around, when we would go into the studio, basically a record store's worth of CDs to listen to as little bits to say what are we about anymore? It ends up literally being thousands of CDs because we really listen to everything and enjoy so much music.

BRUT: I guess I just heard a lot of the influence --like the earlier stuff was more like Pink Floyd type psychedelia where it was harder, but now it's more like other 60s stuff like Esquivel and Richard Lyman

COYNE: I think only by default would we actually sound like some of these things. Honestly, some of that stuff is great. But to assume that we knew that we could do that kind of stuff--that's the leap that the Flaming Lips can take because we're so enthusiastic that we want to try something, that the enthusiasm almost covers up the lack of knowledge of how to do it. So we just say, We've got a lot of energy and we really want to do it, and we'll find the ability if we can to do it. I think that's how our records get made for the most part. Sometimes I feel that other bands feel the same way, that they want to do new things, but it's just hard to do. And unless you have a lot of persistence and a lot of energy, sometimes you just don't get down to doing something new. I think sometimes we're lucky that I really can beat everybody down. At the end of the day I'm still standing, and I just say "My ideas better win, dammit!" I can go longer without food or sleep than anyone around me.

BRUT: It's funny, because I was thinking that your ideas had really expanded with the *Zaireeka* project and the Parking Lot Experiments and the tour concept. You seem to have more ideas these days than fewer.

COYNE: I think the reason is that about four years ago I started to exercise. I must admit, I used to sit around and read and worry a lot, and attempt ideas in a manageable step at a time. It wasn't until I started exercising and doing more that I really started doing more. I just thought I'm going to do more, because time is short, people! I want to do a bunch by the time I'm 70; I don't want to have done just a couple of things. And it occurred to me that I'm going to need more energy.

BRUT: What are you doing? Running, swimming?

COYNE: I run and ride my bike. I try to do ten miles up to three times a week and I do the bike a couple times a week like 25 miles. When I can. I'm not a nut about it. But I do it when I'm sitting at home and I have the time to do it. I must admit, I think the benefits of that extra energy, I think people mistook it for me knowing what I was doing. So when I would approach people about these ideas they'd say "Great, let's go and do them!" I really have been

lucky that some of the things I've wanted to do have worked. Sometimes if you have two things that work it makes the possibility that the third thing will work so much better.

BRUT: Reading the liner notes to *Zaireeka*, you talk about juxtaposing all these sounds and getting so many sounds going on at once. It seemed to me that's exactly what *Soft Bulletin* is; you had quieted things down but it opened up the sound field so you can get so many more details and have them all be audible.

COYNE: You're exactly right. Some of that is just discovering what is the limitations of 20 distorted guitars. How much impact can it have. I must admit, some of it I didn't find out until I was doing the Parking Lot and the boom box experiment things, where I could literally have hundreds of sounds going at one time if I wanted to, and just seeing how much impact just two things have or two hundred things would have. I could see how sometimes more of the same thing doesn't add up to sounding like more of the same thing. If you were in the room and watching us, you might be impressed that there were 20 guitars in there, but just to hear it on the record, sometimes it isn't as impressive as one. And sound is like that. Sound is not cumulative like you think it is. It actually has to be placed in there so you can hear it in the sound field. No, you're exactly right, I think we found ways to say, "Well, if we're going to use that sound, let's use a counterpoint or a contrast point so you can hear the difference." That really is just experience, and taking time and figuring out why are these things that we think should work--why aren't they working, and how do other people do these things and they work so well. And then finding our own way into that. And building on it through the successes and failures of our own music, as opposed to listening to someone else's and wondering how they do it, we fail on our own and say, "We know how to do it, because we've done it."

BRUT: It seems like on *Oh My Gawd* and those early albums it seems like you wanted to put in a lot of sounds. *Soft Bulletin* seems to cut back on the loud guitars, leaving incredibly dense sounds. Which is why I refer to Esquivel, because he orchestrated this massive number of sounds that worked within the arrangement.

COYNE: And I took it that way. I mean, that's a skill to say, "I want all these things." Everybody wants all those things, but it's a skill to say "Here's how we can do that." People forget how complicated music and arranging is. You get so used to hearing it you think you must be able to throw these things together in any order you want. But it's not that case. People probably think that way about journalists as

well. They probably think, "How hard could it be to listen to a record and have something to say about it." Well, try it! There's a lot of words to pick from and there's a lot of ways you could present yourself. There's some skill in there. I'm glad that we've kind of figured some of it out. But like you said, I think you can go back to our early records, and say "I see what you guys wanted to do, and I see what you got, and I can see where you guys keep trying to further this vision, and hopefully gain some knowledge at the same time."

BRUT: The other thing that you mentioned was production. That's something I've always noted in your more recent records, especially all the stuff you've done with David Fridman. It seems like this complexity wouldn't be possible without the kind of 3-D production you've worked out with him. Is that something that developed just with him over the years, or something he brought to you?

COYNE: It was really just through all of us working together. We've worked with him since late 1988. So that's quite a while. And when we do records, we spend a lot of time with him. We'll virtually live together months at a time, and sometimes working on the same piece of music over and over. You develop a kind of language—even though I don't know music, or equipment or frequencies per se, I think people arrive at a way that they can communicate to say "Here's what I want," without necessarily knowing exactly what it is. I mean, that is the problem with art: if you knew what it was, you would already do it. But you have to sort of hint at things that are abstract, and hope that they materialize, but you don't have any idea what they're made of until they're in front of you. So, I think through working with Dave for so long and him working with us in general that we arrive at these things together. I think if someone were to walk into the studio and listen to what we're talking about, they wouldn't have any idea unless they'd been there for months and months. Sometimes the things that we say are references to things that we've honed down from hundreds and hundreds of conversations, sometimes down to one word. We'll say "Do that thing." And that thing will have some name, and it will represent this mountain of work that we've done. But if you were just to walk in you'd say what the fuck does that mean? I think sometimes it's only through that short hand you're able to hint at things and get a lot more work done. I think we run into this scenario so much, where we're approaching a song and Dave goes, "Well, Wayne, that's impossible." And I say, "I know." We don't hesitate for even a moment just because it's impossible. I think if I were a scientist or a surgeon or something, and there was some life at stake, and someone said "That's

impossible," I'd take it seriously, but we run into these situations all the time where they'll say "That's not possible," and I say "We'll find a way," and we do! We constantly get to these things where there's no precedent for it. I don't know how anybody else would do it, but here's how we'll try to do it. And he actually embraces that. I don't think he gets frustrated or thinks we're retards. I think he loves it when we approach things that could be new ideas and new sounds and new ways of making music.

BRUT: Is the "Spiderbite Song" based on real events? Who got bit?

COYNE: Oh, totally, yeah. I think you can sort of tell in the song. Steven was bit by a spider Thanksgiving of 1996, I think. It was brief, but there was a short time, maybe about 10 or 15 minutes where they thought they were going to have to cut his hand off. And he's such a great musician, he really needs his hands for what he does. If it was someone like me, who basically uses his mouth and his brain, I don't think it would have been that big a deal. But with Steven, he really is a skilled, intricate musician.

BRUT: What does he play on the records? You guys don't credit any specific instruments.

COYNE: He plays everything. He sings, he plays guitar, keyboards, piano, pedal steel, everything that you hear on there, he probably played it at some point.

BRUT: And Michael's still the bassist.

COYNE: Michael plays guitar and sings and bass for the most part.

BRUT: And you're still doing guitar.

COYNE: I do some guitar, but mostly my role now is sort of like dictator.

BRUT: You're songwriter and dictator?

COYNE: Yeah. I sort of sit at the back and yell at people. I do some instrumentation once in a while, but for the most part, Steven's precision overrides my quirkiness.

BRUT: So he's execution, in other words.

COYNE: Yeah, nice word. Sometimes when you're arranging things that have up to 150 parts, precision starts to add up. You don't want 150 parts that are all a little bit sloppy. You need some precision, and Steven has that. Sometimes it just goes that who can play it best, plays it.

BRUT: Where did this spider bite take place?

COYNE: He claims it was in his garage. Now I don't know what he was doing in his garage.

BRUT: In Oklahoma?

COYNE: Yeah. He claims he was cleaning up his garage, but he never does that, so I'm not sure what he was doing out there.

BRUT: I was kind of hearing some kind of continuity through the songs where one song seemed to pick

up the theme of the previous one.

COYNE: Well, it wasn't designed so. I think just the things that were happening to us at the time and the things that were interesting to us at the time, and just the grand scope of the songs, sometimes I think that ties them together. But it wasn't designed that way. There were other songs that we had as well that we didn't put in there. I guess it was 7 or 8 months ago we arrived at what we decided to release, really oblivious as to how one tied into the other. I can see how thematically they feel like they could be of the same sentiment.

BRUT: They all seem to have medical themes or sexual innuendo going on.

COYNE: I agree. Like I say, that wasn't by design, but I think it's there nonetheless.

BRUT: Is the title *The Soft Bulletin* a Burroughs reference, like *The Soft Machine*.

COYNE: Not really, even though I've heard of that and even the band the Soft Machine. Or anything that people are calling "soft." I don't know exactly where it came from, because I wasn't actually thinking of it as an album title, I was just thinking of it as a title for a mix tape that I'd made to take when we travel.

BRUT: The next question as I'd written it was "What's it like in OKC since the bombing." But what I meant by that was whether it had influenced any of the lyrics, like on "Superman" that seemed pessimistic.

COYNE: Not really. Even when that whole thing happened. We were actually recording our last record, cause that was in 95. Even when that was happening, people would ask me about it, and I would tell them I didn't know anybody that was in it, so it really didn't have much effect on me other than it being a big thing in the news, just like for everybody else. At the same time, it occurs to you that people do die every day, and it can't have impact on you unless you know them. But certainly events in my own life had some impact and made me think about those things.

BRUT: There's a line in there about the world being too heavy for Superman to lift.

COYNE: Oh, right, right. Cause my father had died of cancer. I guess it was during the end of 96, beginning of 97 there was this whole downward spiral of about 6 or 7 months there. You can't go through something like that without having it change your outlook. I guess there's some juicy, death-related, philosophical leanings going on.

BRUT: In "The Gash" there was the line "Will the fight for our sanity be the fight for our lives." I was wondering what you were referring to as sanity there?

COYNE: I think sometimes that seems to be the most tenuous part of your thoughts, and you don't actually know if you're right or not. I guess there's the term "the isolation of your own mind." Sometimes

what you think is correct and what the world thinks is correct seems like it's balanced in there but can sway one way or the other so easily. It seems like to go through life and become an adult and mature and not lose your perspective seems to be the biggest challenge after a while. I look around and I see people who I thought would grow older and wiser, but they seemed to grow older and less--I don't know--normal at the same time. For myself, the things that I think seem to be--I'm always right at the edge of what I think and what I'm saying in my songs. It isn't as though I save up things for years and years and then talk about them, it's always what just came in is usually what's just getting ready to go out. I don't know, I think about insanity a lot, I suppose.

BRUT: That line wasn't meant to have broader political implications, it was more of a personal transformation thing or metaphysical statement.

COYNE: Exactly. I think that's what all my songs in a way are saying. Even though it's about me, I can see how it's about everybody, not speaking of everybody as a whole but as individuals.

BRUT: I thought "The Gash" was neat because I heard a lot of Funkadelic references.

COYNE: Funkadelic huh?

BRUT: There's that song "Lost in my Mind Again" from *America Eats Its Young*, and the melody of the chorus reminds me of this one melodic part in your song. It kind of turns from this Beatles psychedelia to this gospel chorus and then this Funkadelic thing kicks in, with the funky bass.

COYNE: Yeah, yeah. [Thinking I'm nuts.] Well, I'll take that as a grand compliment because it's merely a coincidence.

BRUT: There's a lot of neat things going on in the album. Even though it's a softer sound than the early stuff, it's still pretty radical, although because it's softer there's always people who are going to yell sell out.

COYNE: Those same things occurred to me, because I can listen to a Phil Spector and think of the wall of sound as big as the wall of sound of Sonic Youth. Some people don't; some people think that if it's not a big distorted guitar it must be made by a bunch of wussies. But I haven't found too much of that. I haven't found too many people who've thought that.

BQ

If you want to learn more about the Flaming Lips, check out their Web site at

<http://www.flaminglips.com/>

And find out about Jeff Bagato at
<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/others/bagatojeff.htm>



DON'T CALL THESE GIRLS PUSSIES!

How can you not love a pop punk trio calling itself Catfight? The name suggests so much: bratty-ness, sleazy sex, a tougher-than-nails attitude. All of which the band has in spades. All of which would matter not a whit if the songs weren't any good. Which they are. If you're lazy, and we're feeling kind of lazy today, think The Ronettes duking it out in a dark alley with The Ramones and you've got something of a handle on what Catfight sounds like. With their latest disc, *Frustrated*, breaking big on east coast alternative play lists, we'd thought we'd give Katy and Susanne — did we mention it's a gal group? — a ring down in Atlanta and see what they had to say for their bad selves.

Brutarian: Wassssssssssssssuuuuuuuuuuuuup?

Katy: Obviously you, Mr. Brutarian. How many cups of coffee have you had today?

Brutarian: Not enough if I'm thinking it's clever to imitate characters in a Budweiser commercial.

Jennifer: It could have been worse. You could have been doing the Bud frogs.

Brutarian: True. True. Oh wait, that's a Budweiser commercial too... Damn, anyway, we see that your drummer's leaving and being replaced by Susanne of The Vendettas?

Susanne: Hello. That's me.

Brutarian: So what happened with The Vendettas? We loved you guys!

Susanne: It's a big secret so don't tell anyone 'till after Halloween. Buffy and Johnny, the other two members of the band have this new project called White Light and it's kind of arty. It's amazing and they just want to focus all their attention on that. Actually, I hadn't played with them in a while. They wanted some big dick in their band so they kicked me out.

Katy: Oh, that's not true [laughing].

Susanne: No, it's not but it makes for better copy.

Brutarian: Well, that's the last time we interview a band with only one disc out. We play you up, act like the band is going places and then, pow! that's all she wrote.

Jennifer: Hey, you called us even though you thought we had only one disc released.

Brutarian: Oh yeah, that's right. Okay, never mind. Let's move on. Your first single is a little ditty about the greatest woman of the 20th Century.

Katy: Yeah, Mamie Van Doren. Whom I've always loved and what was great about releasing that title as our first single was that I got to speak to Mamie over the phone and we became friends.

Brutarian: Golly gee, how did you manage that. Brutarian wrote the definitive article [laughing] on Mamie and we never even got a postcard.

Katy: Well, go to her site and e-mail her and let her know. She's really friendly and very interested in her fans. That's how we struck up a friendship through that interest. Her husband was searching the web and found our single and our web site. He e-mailed me and suddenly I was talking to Mamie and now we keep in touch electronically.

Brutarian: Everyone who digs Mamie has a favorite movie. Aside from *High School Confidential*, what's yours?

Katy: *Girl's Town*. I mean where else are you going to see Mel Torme as a juvenile delinquent.

Brutarian: Have you seen the one with the acid-bleeding trees at the South Pole.

Katy and Susanne: Oh God, no, which one is that.

Brutarian: *Navy vs. the Night Monsters*.

Susanne: Acid-bleeding trees, wow! Definitely a must see...

Brutarian: Segueing into titles, well names, really, what's up with yours. "Catfight" is something of a derogatory term guys use to describe the ineffective way women fight. Why did you pick it?

Katy: Initially, we were going to try to pick a more gender neutral name but one day I was having a disagreement with a girl, it was all perfectly civil, and some guy came running up and yelled "catfight!" It just hit me, then, that that would be a great name for a band.

Brutarian: I'm surprised you haven't written about any of the great catfight scenes in any of the myriad women in prison flicks sitting on your local video rental shelves.

Susanne: Funny you should ask as we just finished watching *Switchblade Sisters*.

Katy: We played before a midnight showing of that here at Georgia State University. Getting paired with that film was perfectly appropriate I thought. Actually, Atlanta is a pretty hip town for trash and underground culture. A local radio station did an interview with the director of *Switchblade Sisters*, Jack Hill. And later talked to Herschell Gordon Lewis. There's a Drive-In Club which has a big film fest. In connection with that Tura Santana and Haji of *Faster Pussycat Kill Kill* came. It's a cool town. You need to come down and pay us a visit.

Brutarian: We have visited and what really impressed us was the number of used bookstores.

Katy: There are a lot. A lot. Hey, the guy who puts our record ran his company out of the back of one.

Susanne: Getting back to the women in prison film, it's interesting that despite our name, we're not really big fans of the genre.

Katy: They really are more for males than for gals. 50s crime films, 60s biker movies. That's more our style. *She-Devils on Wheels*, a purchase just made on DVD to let you know where we're coming from. Although I shouldn't be speaking for everyone in the band.

Jennifer: [Laughs] That's okay, Katy, but let me add that I do enjoy the catfighting in Aaron Spelling.

Brutarian: Switching gears a bit, you use a lot of naughty language and also sing about naughty subjects — "She's Tight," "Syphilis" — how do your mothers feel about their sweet southern daughters writing and performing material like this?



Katy: My mom is fine with it, it's part of the genre and so just the appropriate means of expression. My boyfriend's mother and my grandmother really have a problem with it. They both think that aspect of it is gratuitous.

Susanne: I don't feel that way about it at all I just would like to add.

Katy: My parents hate rock and roll anyway so they are never going to listen to the CD all the way through. She'll tell everyone that her daughter is in a band and it's the greatest thing and that you should buy our stuff but she just can't listen to the music.

Brutarian: The music is muscular and melodic, the lyrics not at all subtle about establishing the fact that the band, you as women, aren't afraid to be seen as aggressive and sexually active. There is a tendency, though, when projecting such a stance in being labeled by the male record buying audience as slatternly or obnoxious. A different story if you're male of course...

Jennifer: Are you asking if there is a double standard with the male audience or if one exists?

Brutarian: Let's tackle both...

Katy: Well, we've been trying to figure out the male double standard for thousands of years...

Brutarian: That's why we're doing the interview, so you can answer centuries old conundrums.

Susanne: It is a problem. Guys want the virgin-whore. They want women who are sexually experienced but yet they want to be the guy providing the sexual experience. Impossible. Guys just aren't into strong women. There's a lot of lip

service there but when it comes right down to it guys are terrified of women who think like "men."

Katy: But while we agree with you here philosophically, the tone of our music, our performances are such that no one is going to take it seriously enough to deconstruct it...

Brutarian: [Laughing] Still, that's what we "critics" have to do; otherwise we'd talk about everything but what brought us to you. As far as what brought us to you, rock and roll, what made you want to get into this game? There's not much money in it and fame is few and far between for most. Guys usually answer this by telling me it's for the attention for the women...

Susanne: [Laughing] Hey, we want the women too... We're in this band to get girls.

Jennifer: Speak for yourself [laughing].

Katy: We like attention too and that's one of the reasons we started this. Also the need to express my inner angst as I'm no good at art.

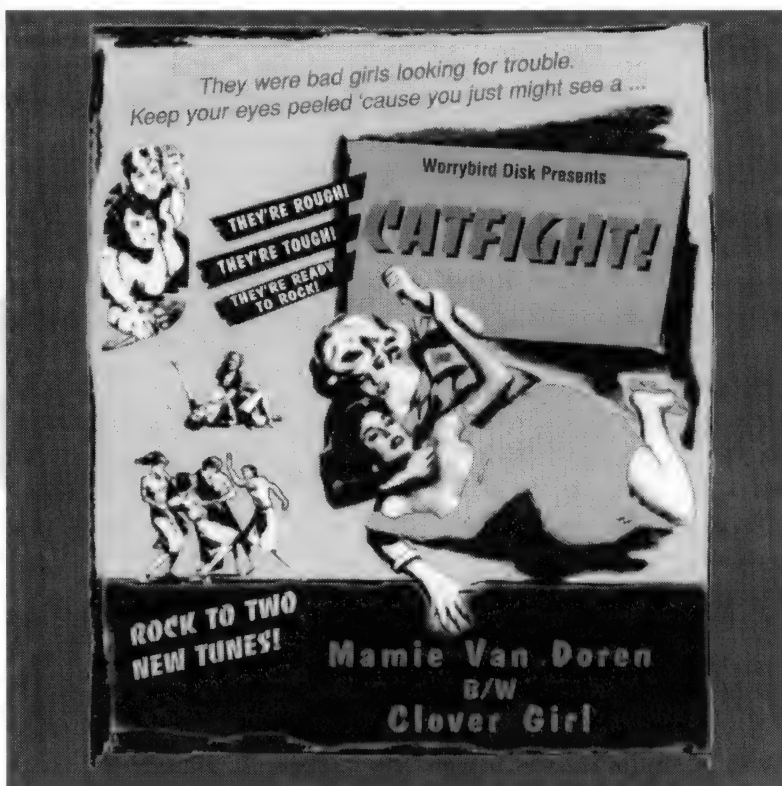
Brutarian: Who provided the inspiration growing up. There weren't too many female hard rockers out there.

Katy: Hey, my first concert was The Go-Go's in the 8th grade. The Beatles and The Rolling Stones were what I played. Then The Ramones.

Brutarian: Mostly guys. That didn't discourage you?

Katy: No, in fact, it was guys, The Ramones, who had me saying, "Hey, I can do that!"

Jennifer: As a guitarist, I've always been inspired by women playing in bands. L7 was a strong influence. But just seeing local women in rock



bands was inspiring.

Brutarian: You're all rather attractive and I'm sure the boys in the audience think so too, so come clean, how much with the sexiness is too much?

Jennifer: Well we're not that sleazy...

Katy: Well, he's never seen a show with us... we could get down. We could get dirty. We're all for sleazy. But I was in a band, Doll Squad where we did emphasis the sexuality of the band. Kind of like The Runaways with the lingerie and the lipstick. But after awhile, and Susanne would agree with me here, it just got to be too much. Even the guy that put our record out was writing reviews of us and asking if we could play. That kind of focus on, and attention to our look or looks I don't need. A guy drops a drumstick at a bar gig and it's just a mistake. We do it and it's "Oh, the girls can't play. They're just trying to get our attention with their mini-skirts."

Jennifer: That doesn't mean we're going to dress like hausfraus...

Susanne: No, we still want to be hot [laughs].

Katy: If your reputation precedes you, however; that is, if you're known as good musicians then you can be as hot as you want to. You can dress and look whatever way you'd like to... Come out naked, if you have built a reputation...

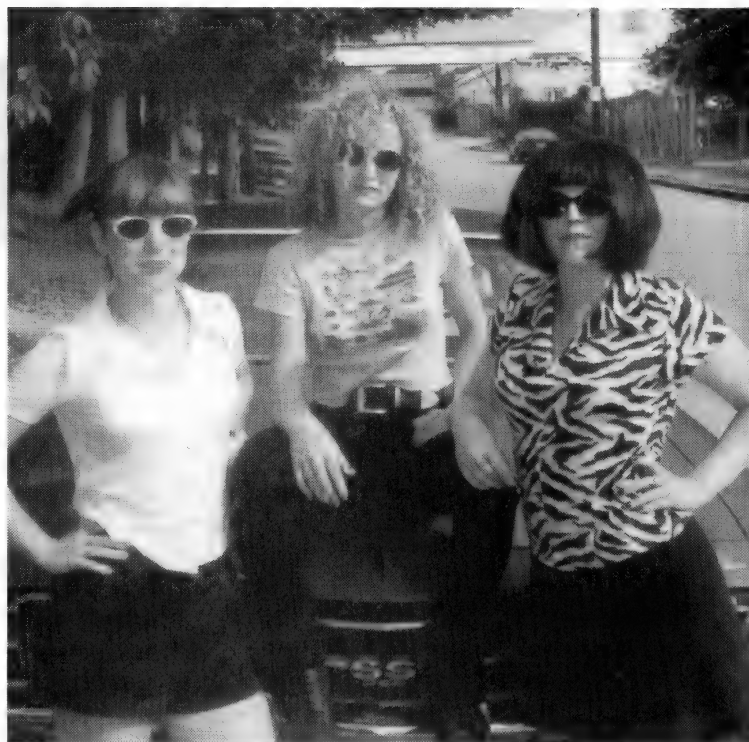
Brutarian: "Naked" brings to mind a fairly notorious band, The Demolition Doll Rods, who, if you'll pardon the pun, seem to be going about it, at least under your rules, ass backward.

Jennifer: They have two gals who play in the alto-gether...

Brutarian: And no one seems to be asking if their music is worthwhile or whether they have chops. All anyone is asking is: just how naked are they?

Katy: The closest we got to that was playing with Tribe 8. Lesbians playing topless. Lot of bouncing although it seemed kind of painful to me.

Jennifer: More authentic nakedness than when I saw The Demolition Doll Rods. It seemed like



the girls in Tribe 8 really wanted to be naked.

Susanne: More than sexual...

Katy: It was a political statement.

Jennifer: The Demolition Doll Rods just didn't seem that comfortable with it.

Katy: The drummer definitely seemed messed up about it. I thought the lead guitarist was okay with it.

Brutarian: Well, you'd have to be messed up to do that. It definitely takes a lot of something or other to play naked in front of a bunch of strangers.

Katy: Well even with Tribe 8, the drummer was very well endowed and it didn't seem worth it. It just looked very painful to me. Physically painful.

Jennifer: It was definitely: "Ouch!"

BQ

Want to know more about Catfight? So do we! Check them out at their Web site by visiting:

<http://www.catfight.net>

Dom Salemi interviewed these girls.
Dom Salemi interviews *all* the hot girl groups.
Dom Salemi is a nasty little man.

On Manor's mind.....

by Stately
Wayne Manor

Now that we're firmly entrenched in the "New Millennium — like that makes any difference — I've decided it's about time someone corrected all those eggheads and blowhards who analyzed the Nineties and got it wrong (i.e., didn't agree with me). Believe it or blow me a kiss, there are actually some people who will make public statements without first seeking my approval! And one of the themes most often approached in this foolish manner focused on defining what was *the* breakout industry, product, whatever of the decade just past.

I, of course, know the indisputable answer.

The capitalists out there may cite the U.S. economic growth and prosperity. They would be insular numskulls. Besides all the obvious reasons the dollar deal falls flat, you've got to ask yourself one question: Do I feel wealthy? Well, do you, punk? Same here. Don't *show* me the money, *hand it over*.

What about them newfangled computer thingees? There's no doubting the monumental impact the Intel Cartel has had. Nonetheless, the PC wildfire wasn't really touched off until the release of Windows 95; and the industry's bastard son, the Internet, is an ever *more* recent mainstream phenomenon. Therefore, while motherboard mania undeniably grew monstrous, it didn't mean diddly the entire first half of the decade.

Nah, I'll tell you what boomed biggest in the Nineties: whores. I don't mean that euphemistically, as in "media whores." I'm referring to brazen jezebels, bless their beloved booties.

Professor Manor traces the Bimbo Boom to the *Eighties'* premier product, home video-tape equipment. Twas during the tail end of that decade "amateur porn" went from a nudge-wink underground hobby to an, um, full-blown cottage industry. The semi-acceptability of same and emerging star status of pro smut performers tore many puritanical taboos to bits. And once staid society removed the scarlet letter stigma, Ho Lib went into overdrive. About smeggin' time, too.

Pre-Nineties, something like the Pamela Anderson-Tommy Lee tape would have been a double career killer. Instead, it became a best-seller, available for pulic pe-

rusal in the same establishments that carry *Fantasia*. When the WWF can introduce a pimp character imploring "everybody to climb aboard the Ho Train," and he's wildly cheered as a good guy, you know Shameless Strumpet Chic is fully upon us. I'm half-expecting Mattel to announce the imminent release of Nympho Barbie (with bendable knees, no doubt.)

As an exhibitionist **and** lecher, I doubly cheer the legion of fellow unabashed show-offs who brought about the Bimbo Boom. And "legion" is no exaggeration.

In the pre-Boom days, the head count on hardcore hokey-pokiers was in the hundreds, the vast majority of whom did one-off layouts for magazines only sold in a handful of joints within a tiny zoned district on the perimeter of urban areas. Through the Nineties, the Dirty Debutante vid series *alone* showcased more shaggers than the latter total. Go online, and you can find said sum **squared**... and that's just "teenagers" listings at the free sites! Add up all media, and we're ready for the Million Tramp March!! Mind you, that's just willing-to-pose hos — only a fraction of the full floozy tally!!! Hey, look, a series of exclamation points!!!!

If the post-WWI era came to be known as "The Roaring Twenties," then SWManor officially declares our preceding decade "The Whoring Nineties." Sure beat the hell out of "The Anal Eighties." Viva, la vixens!

Arguably the most **annoying** of the boom products is the cellular phone, a device apparently designed to encourage dangerous drivers and rude diners to loudly exchange inconsequential nitwit blather that somehow wasn't "important" until telecoms invented \$29 a month calling plans. But I, being of superior mind and body, have come up with a reason to actually *obtain* one of the portable pesterers — and I owe the idea to Univision's *Lente Loco*.

Manormaniacs who've read my droolings over unequaled goddess Sofia Vergara know (a) I watch U-Vision regularly and (b) I comprende about 200 words of Espanol. *Lente Loco* is sort of a Spanish-language "Extreme Candid Camera," and, being so visual, is very easy for us Hispanically-challenged to enjoy — especially when you get an eyeful of breathtaking cohost Oda-

lys, the absolute personification of "amazon," in all the best senses.

Loco frequently pulls stunts that sissy American networks would never have the Spaldings to even **consider**. One of my favorites easily exemplifies this claim: A ringer test drives a used car to an appointed location, parks it and steps away a couple dozen yards to haggle with the owner — then a *Lente* confederate "accidentally" crushes the vehicle with heavy construction machinery as the onlooking seller goes insane. Is that a cool stunt or what?!

My cell phone epiphany came after watching an episode where a *Loco* actor **appeared** to be yapping into his instrument about people he was following down a sidewalk — all comments completely within earshot of the victim, of course. Whether that's what was really going on is inconsequential — the concept is sheer brilliance. And Mr. Manor urges you to make it brillianter.

First off, it shouldn't be too difficult to pick up a NON-activated cell for, at the max, a double-sawbuck. But what a small price to pay for all the sadistic enjoyment the device promises.

With a little imagination, you'll soon discover there are more possibilities here than colors in a Skittles ad. I'll give you a few "starter" scenarios. After that, you're on your own.

"Sir, I believe I've spotted the suspect. Did you say he's (detailed description of the mark)?... That's him, all right. Have the anesthesia team and copter crew on full alert — and remember, this is a Code Red extraction: no witnesses, no bodies."

That'll get 'em paranoid; now, let's go for pissed. "I kid you not, the scuzzball I'm following has gotta be the biggest loo-o-o-o-o-oser in town... Looks Cro-Magnon; and that smell, phwoo. Somebody obviously said nope to soap....I don't know, I'm guessing either military deserter or child molester. Prob'ly on his way to hang out at the airport men's room right now....Hmm? Nah, he appears far too stupid for *that*."

Care to scare? Adopt a trailer trash twang, enter a crowded elevator, and lay down "Listen, Jeb, I chopped her corpse up real good and put it in the trunk. I say we cook part of it and dump the rest by the lake like usual."

Or how about this romantic chatter? "Joey, get the camera warmed up, I think I've discovered our next starlet!...Yeah, right in front of me in (describe target's clothing)...Oh, I'd say about 36-C. They look natural, too....Mmmm, that's fine as wine, brother. And she really knows how to shake it when she walks....I'm telling you, she be PERFECT for the Double-Stuffed Gangbang series."

That one might earn you a face slap; but then again, the tomato may be among the legion of spirited sluts detailed above!

HUBBA HUBBA HONEYS: In the spirit of this issue's MMM, I proudly bestow Honeydom status upon the untold horde of whores performing the pubic polka for the public's pleasure. I'm not citing full-time pro porn floozies groin-grinding for big gold and glory; I'm referring to the countless daring darlings courageous and salacious enough to be captured on camera more for kicks than as a career move — and right out there for us to grin at gratis.

With its combination of boffing babes and blasphemy, **www.acidpope.com** is Stately's favorite free skin site. So, go there pronto and randomly linkify. Note that the wanton wenches are not making a cent off your ogling; and with all but a distinct minority toiling in anonymity, the stuffed strumpets don't even get an ego trip out their efforts.

Doing something without fortune and/or fame as an end product? Your King Of Conceit breaks out in a rash just *thinking* about such a prospect!

As oft noted, the Hubba segment is devoted to honoring lesser-knowns who deserve far greater acclaim from the ignorant masses. Well, when you consider these girls as a unit are changing the very social fabric of the free world, and they're not merely obscure, they're unidentified, that makes them the **ultimate** Honeys, now dunnit?

BQ



BRUTARIAN Library



danny Hellman

A History of Celibacy: From Athena to Elizabeth I, Leonardo da Vinci, Florence Nightingale, Ghandi, & Cher

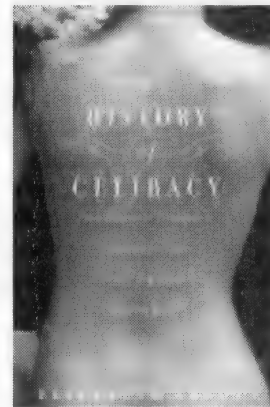
Elizabeth Abbott

(1999) Scribners

At Home with the Marquis de Sade: A Life

Francine du Plessix Gray

(1999) Simon & Schuster



Elizabeth Abbott's *A History of Celibacy* is just about the most promiscuous book I've ever read: a book that is not only composed of all sorts of persons and behaviors, a kind of mixed-up encyclopedia of celibacy that refuses the banal confines of a single category, historical period, or gender, but a thoroughly indiscriminant book. Abbott

works with such a fast, loose definition of celibacy that it comes to refer to many more things than mere abstention from sex, including "female bearded saints," "shotgun celibacy," "Chinese eunuchism as a career opportunity," and "anorexic celibacy." The freest floating of Abbott's categories involves what she calls "circumstantial celibacy" caused by "a dearth of suitable lovers." I'm not sure that a dry spell in one's romantic life counts as celibacy, particularly since there's nothing ascetic about being not being able to get a date. But Abbott will not be stopped. She describes this blatant semantic licentiousness as a rebellion from "rigidly pedantic and unhelpful distinctions." I call it sleeping around.

Abbott's willingness to entertain almost anything as a form of celibacy is at once lofty and profligate. She can be extravagantly self-indulgent when it comes to getting her message out that celibacy offers "a staggering panorama of reality, involving humanity everywhere and always." I've heard of pansexualism but pancelibacy? Nonetheless, Abbott is determined to show that we have been seriously mistaken about the nature of celibacy. In a strange, obviously unintentional, parody of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, she brings us the entire history of celibacy as a means of restoring sexual continence to the prominence that it has been denied in these sex positive times. No less than a complete survey of biblically grand proportions will convince us that celibacy, far from being a minor phenomenon, has been intimately linked to the highest forms of power and knowledge — a matter worthy of goddesses, kings, popes, and shamans. Consider the motives by which we have been coerced into

devoting endless energy into discovering the secrets of celibacy, the techniques by which we have been obliged to experience its rigors, and the appeal of a spiritual vocation that we are no longer members of the female sex. Consider the Marquis de Gesvres who, in the eighteenth century, was subjected to an impotence trial because the Catholic Church considered the inability to procreate a crime. Did I forget to mention that Abbott also offers blow-by-blow descriptions of castration and female genital circumcision, a short essay on prison sex, as well as an intro to the chastity belt, which she compares to "an enormous, saw-toothed metal Kotex pad?"

Love hurts, but not nearly as much as celibacy. Abbott knows this and yet she is self-proclaimed, practicing celibate who, for the sake of the feminist cause, tries against all odds to make positive role models out of pus-sucking nuns. Frankly, I don't buy it. But don't let that prevent you from reading *A History of Celibacy*, which proves the point that abstinence means more than just saying "no."

Do you ever worry that you've become one of those dull, stay-at-home types? Fret no more because I know a book that will forever dispel any fear on your part that an evening in must necessarily be boring: Francine du Plessix Gray's *At Home with the Marquis de Sade: A Life*. The misdeeds of the nobleman — who has been variously reviled and revered as "a professor emeritus of crime," "the apostle of assassins," and "the author of [unmentionable] books" — make for an excellent read that is guaranteed to keep you up well past your bedtime.

Donatien Alphonse Franoise de Sade was a terror from the day he was born, in 1740, into a family that considered itself inferior only to the princes of royal blood. When he was four years old, he was banished from the palace of the Prince de Conde, the head of the junior branch of the Bourbons, for assaulting his royal playmate during a spat over a toy. He deeply resented his exile, which consisted of being shipped off to his grandmother's estate in Avignon, and did whatever he could from then on to both snub and antagonize the monarchy. After being imprisoned by Louis XVI for excessive libertinage, he would write: "One can malign the government, the king, religion - sheer trifles. But a whore... one must never insult a whore..."

Sade's contempt for the monarchy's treatment of a nobleman of his rank was

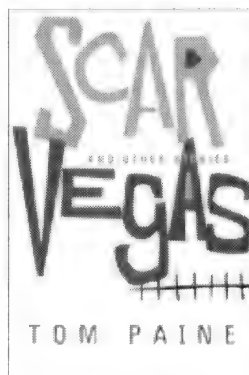
surpassed only by his spite for religion, which played an essential and complicated role in his sexual development. His father and his uncle, the Abby de Sade, also known as "the priest of Epicurus," were notorious libertines. Sade compared his uncle's chateau to a "seraglio" and credited him with giving him a first-class education in hedonism. He also had the Abby to thank for introducing him to some of the world's finest erotica, including *Venus in the Cloister*, or the Nun in Her Nightdress, and *The Bordell*, or John the Fucker Debauched, as well as Aretino's *Book of Postures*. But even more formative to the Marquis' sexual character were the sever whippings he received at the hands of his Jesuit instructors; he liked to quip that his predilection for sodomy was a sign of his Jesuit vocation.

Gray does a brilliant job of chronicling Sade's life, which has all the gruesome enchantment of a fairy tale. Certainly, as she explains: "Fantasies of total control would always remain at the heart of his real life and his fictional orgies." Sadism, as practiced by the Marquis, is anything but an unconstrained expression of raw sexuality. His boundless need for control and dominance manifested itself in the highly choreographed, ritualized, and repetitive nature of his debauches. Few writers have been more repelled by the messy spontaneity of nature than Sade, who in a moment of mock exasperation once begged: "Let's please put some order into these orgies."

-Kathryn A. Kopple

Scar Vegas Tom Paine

(2000) Houghton & Mifflin



small town meeting in Vermont). There's the transvestite Marine General deliberately getting himself arrested for shoplifting a bra on his last day of duty. A beautiful Yuppie businesswoman suddenly finding herself without shoes, money or references in El Paso where she has come to look for a job. An ex-con in Vegas on the eve of his sis-

ter's wedding so cocksure of things you know he's heading for the kind of fall that will become the stuff of urban legends. And those who come to some kind of resolution — the skateboarding dooper looking for anarchy in Portland, the young New England soldier fighting in the Gulf, the Romanian poet on the run from Ceausescu — seem not to be so sure of what it is they've resolved.

Crazy Horse In Heaven

Robert P. Arthur

(2000) Stonehall Publishing



After the World War III results in a new Dark Age, ten psychologically damaged survivors set out on horseback into the wilderness. Their goal is to collect all remaining literature they can find and return to their settlement to build a library of civilization, and a

new culture. But these woods are not only dark and deep, but home to time shifts, hallucinations, strange visions, impossible creatures, and other survivors with murderous intentions. The post-apocalypse world is much like a telescoped version of the ancient: full of misery, disease, superstition, and danger.

Though the travelers are simply men, formerly educators, business men, professionals — together, like a mangy pack of feral dogs they become emblems of the dark, sometimes violent side of human nature, set loose in a landscape where a single stray thought can alter time or surroundings. The story's flawed protagonist is the Professor, a new-age Odysseus who tries to hold it all together even as he himself obsesses about the one woman on the journey, a nameless woman who prays to her own god, a shadowy archetypal figure she calls "Katie." The other pilgrims are Pgeon, once a druggist but now a self-styled Native American shaman, and the spirit of the dead warrior Crazy Horse, intent on a return to Earth for another shot at building a nation — one that plays by the rules of nature.

The story opens in the midst of the journey, after the men have discovered the woman wandering unprotected, half-witless, in the woods. All of them want her but finally the Professor stakes his claim. Half-crazed and traumatized as the others, he first rapes her, then in remorse tries

clumsily, roughly, to feed and take care of her. They push on through the woods, amidst craziness and betrayal and mutiny, arguing the merits of Shakespeare as they ride. The Professor quotes literary selections to cheer their spirits, and gradually the woman begins to seem to him as more than just a woman; perhaps an omen of the future, or at least his own salvation.

Meanwhile, Pgeon — the pharmacist turned shaman — reads signs in the weather and dreams of the second coming of Crazy Horse. He secretly puts himself to many tests, perhaps the oddest of which involves stuffing a live weasel under his shirt and suffering its bites and scratches stoically. At times they ride in circles, and time goes backward night to morning. They lose direction, lose their way, howl at the sky. But consensual reality is a thing of the past; it has no place in this ravaged world. Frightening apparitions turn out to have no substance, while the most innocuous — like an old woman rocking on her front porch — turn out to be deadly. As the ragged band moves from settlement and isolated camp to camp, collecting the remnants of the world's books, some members are lost or killed. Mutiny looms. The professor begins to despair, wondering if it wouldn't be kinder to kill everyone rather than go on.

The Professor gradually understands he is competing with not just the punishing geography and the hopelessly fucked-up society, but with the supernatural; specifically, with the ghost of Crazy Horse for the heart and mind of the woman he has come to love and need.

Ultimately *Crazy Horse* is not just fantasy or science fiction but a lyrical merging of history and future apocalypse. Like *House of Leaves*, this experimental narrative isn't for everyone. It's a commentary on the fate of civilization, the influence of culture and religion, the rare quality of human loyalty and the high price of betrayal — and the human race's chances for survival, or at least redemption, in a world purged of all sense and moral landmarks. The author incorporates dark humor and the pull of the archetypal quest story to draw the reader to *Crazy Horse*'s climactic showdown between good and evil, old and new. Or, as one of the characters puts it: "Cowboys and Indians... hard show to beat on a Saturday morning."

—Lenore Hart

The Song of the Swan **Arthur D'Alembert** (1998) Universal Publishers

Good old fashioned science fiction, 30s

style, done with a millennium slant. Now who could find fault with that?

Not me.

Ain't gonna tell ya much about what happens other than to say it's an old kinda tale, where a dire threat from a far-off planet nearly has its way but gets derailed at the last minute by intrepid people and some good luck. Stuff like this has been done before, but it seems like it got outlawed or something somewhere around the 50s for reasons that still elude me. And kinda upsets me too as I'm one of them goofs that actually "likes" math and science and by golly, at least as far as I can tell, the stuff they're still calling "science" fiction.

Word to you intellectual types: *SWAN* has more than its fair share of typos; occasional cardboard cutout characterizations and clunky dialog. You should not care as it's WHAT'S GOING ON that counts. The characters are a mere vehicle to carry the techno-plot forward and once you get into this you're really not going to give a rat's ass about their psychological development, their angst, or any of the rest of that nonsense. Just say your lines Mr. and Ms. Fictions and get out of the way so the story can continue to unfold.

In other words, a terrifically engrossing throwaway tale which you can gobble down in one sitting. A rare thing these days. In any genre.

—James MacLaren

Fucked Up + Photocopied **Eds. Brian Ray Turcotte** **and Christopher T. Miller** (2000) Gingko Press



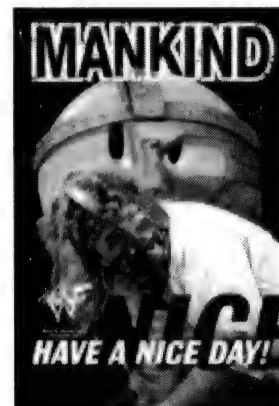
celebration of the punk scene — what

Band flyers and posters superimposed over photos of people making themselves ugly. Sometimes juxtaposed with poorly written reminiscences in unreadable typesets. A

scene? no scene! no future! — circa late 70's to early 80's by some of the worst minds of any generation destroyed by Charlie's Angels and The Banana Splits. Well-fed, calm and warmly clothed, skateboarding through white industrial parks after school looking for other irritated teenagers. So we have the constructions of "these" on shiny, shiny paper in a catalogue raisone. Cut out art and ransom note lettering. Original work with hand lettering. Band photos with professional fonts. Robot Reagans! Invisible subtexts! Skeleton lovers! Blind idiocy! Demonized politicians! Spectral nudes! Invincible mohawks! Granite cacodemonics! Monstrous wounds! All screaming: Moloch! Moloch! In page after page stridently making the case for: Coffee table! Art museum! Retrospective show! Still, there is something magical about the untalented — Kozik, Pettibon and Pushead excepted — letting their untutored visual imaginations run screaming into the dark empty nights of their guileless souls.

—Dom Salemi

Have A Nice Day: A Tale of Blood & Sweatsocks **Mankind (Mick Foley)** (1999/2000) Reagan Books



Many years ago, when I worked on South Capitol Street, I remember running into a protesting wino named Leandrew Grayson, AKA "Junior," at lunch one day. He was trying to get the Supreme Court's attention - not helped by the fact that he was protest-

ing in front of the Library of Congress Annex, a fact he obviously wasn't aware of (and nobody, to my knowledge, saw fit to correct him, either)! I knew his name because he was handing out a one-page treatise to any passerby not quick enough to avoid him, detailing his various past encounters with the law ("the policies") and racial discrimination. To emphasize his plight, he was also carrying a large picture of himself adorned with a multitude of drawn-on arrows, pointing out his various wounds and injuries he had suffered over the years. I bring this up for two reasons: First, Mick Foley has included such an ana-

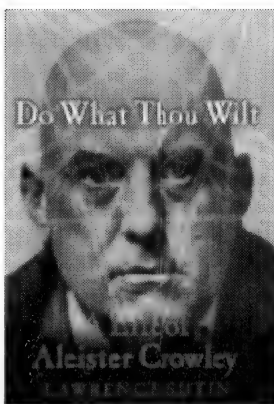
tomically detailed chart of his bodily injuries on the jacket of his book, *Have A Nice Day*; second, had Mr. Grayson only had the good fortune to meet Vince McMahon, head of the World Wrestling Federation (WWF) all those years ago, then perhaps I'd be reviewing his book here, not Mr. Foley's.

By now, I'm sure most of our readers are aware of the notoriety of Foley's book — that it actually hit the #1 spot for a week on the NY Times' Non-Fiction Best Sellers' list in spite of being the autobiography of a professional wrestler who's primarily known for taking the most ridiculous falls ("bumps" in wrestling lingo) in the history of the sport. It's a very easy read, as its' written in plain, everyday conversational English, by a seemingly unpretentious individual who realizes that he's lucky to be in the right place at the right time — the latest pro wrestling boom that started in the mid-90s. Sadly, most newer fans of the sport don't realize that Foley was already a legend among true rasslin' fans long before he ever joined compulsive control freak Vince McMahon's circus known as the aforementioned World Wrestling Federation. Foley paid more than enough dues as "Cactus Jack" in the old NWA and WCW (where he lost most of one ear in a ring in Germany in '94), the Japanese garbage wrestling promotions (FMW, IWA), and ECW before hitting the big time and big money in the WWF as "Mankind." Before I bash the modern day P.T. Barnum, Vinny Mac, any further, I would like to applaud him for both supporting Foley in the writing and publication of this book, and actually allowing him to fully cover his time spent in the non-WWF companies within its contents. Foley appears to tell it like it was throughout his pre-WWF career. Regarding his last three to four years spent in Vinceland, it appears to this reader that he seems reluctant to openly criticize anything about his current company — not unexpected but something the discerning fan would probably like to have seen. All in all, though, an enjoyable read, especially for wrestling fans. I'd place it among the three best books on this subject ever written — along with Lou Thesz' *Hooker* (actually a manuscript, not a published book), and John Jares' *Whatever Happened to Gorgeous George?*

—John Oliver

**Do What Thou Wilt:
A Life of Aleister Crowley**
Lawrence Sutin
(2000) St. Martin's Press

He left a mark and it was the mark of the beast. Occultist, writer, painter, poet,



semi-public life. He may be the most reviled and the most unfairly slandered and libeled person, too.

Lawrence Sutin, whose previous biography of visionary science fiction writer Philip K. Dick brought new appreciation to another misunderstood genius, took ten years researching this new biography, and it shows. He took time to understand Crowley in context. The result is a fair and fearless biography that offers both an introduction for those unfamiliar with The Great Beast 666 and a wonderful overview for anyone who already knows the basics.

In fact, the Introduction, in only 14 pages, offers the best short overview of Crowley's life and impact this reviewer has seen. Reading only this ought to at least double one's appreciation for what the real Aleister Crowley was all about.

There are fresh insights, such as Crowley's insecurity about his male pattern baldness, which prompted him to adopt the tonsured skull that remains his shining hallmark. Remember Uncle Fester in the *Addams Family* television show? That was a nod to, and mockery of, Aleister Crowley as he often appeared in public, robes aswirl and eyes bugging out from beneath his shaven pate.

Crowley was born in 1875 into a fundamentalist Christian family and his intelligence, imagination, and sense of self chafed from the start under the daily scourgings his mother offered. His father, a reformed Quaker and failed lay minister, had inherited a fortune made in brewing and in a chain of pubs that sold Crowley ale and sandwiches, but he longed only to succeed in spreading the word of God as he understood it. He was an important role model for Aleister, who was born Edward Alexander Crowley, incidentally; he later changed to a spelling of his middle name he preferred as being more Celtic.

His mother seems to have hated and feared aspects of the boy and, at an early age, took to calling him The Antichrist. Theirs was a complicated relationship, with much love and even humor interspersed with vituperation and condemnation. He soon determined to live up, or down, to his

mountain climber, world traveler, ethnologist, scoundrel, cosmic jester, and symbol for many of all that's dark and demonic, Aleister Crowley remains one of the most enigmatic and misunderstood people ever to have lived a

nickname as the Great Beast of Revelation. The public ramifications of this bitter irony against his mother's scoldings would eventually prove devastating.

Aleister Crowley enjoyed a privileged upper-class Victorian British upbringing. He was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, to finish his education as a gentleman, and this training in that particularly Victorian self-image remained embedded in his every attitude and action throughout his life. Call it snobbery or sophistication, bigotry or the burden of privilege, his stance both steadied him in his many troubled times and perhaps fed the hubris with which his worst behavior and work is tainted.

It was while at Cambridge that Crowley was initiated into a society of magic called the Order of the Golden Dawn. It must be understood that magic is not pulling rabbits out of hats, but rather a tradition that parallels and predates modern religious and scientific thought. It is nothing more or less than a system of training the mind and body to achieve an understanding of reality, one that encompasses all while promising nothing. Magic is not the path for the faint of heart, and in pursuit of its attainments Crowley was among the first modern Westerners to investigate such matters as yoga, meditation, and what later was termed free love.

More later on the secret at the core of his sojourn, but suffice it to say that much of what is best about what we now term New Age philosophy stems directly from Aleister Crowley's discoveries and ideas as expatiated by his writings.

Despite persistent rumors and lingering canards, he pursued white magic, meaning magic focused on spiritual aims, and not black magic, which means magic focused on material gain and advantage. He was never a Satanist in any sense of the term, having early on rejected even the notions of typical Judaeo-Christian dualism and symbolism. Light and life were his aims and he considered most neo-paganism and all Satanism to be but silly pastimes for bored dilettantes.

He once termed his approach Scientific Illuminism. The methods of science, the goals of religion: He wanted systematic individual experimentation in magic so each seeker might be transformed; gone was the dogma of more accepted religious traditions, gone the superstition and side issues of morality and ethics. He insisted no one believe him or take his word, preferring comrades to followers. He made sure, too, his many human faults and flaws were well known in order to prevent any canonizing after his death. "I will not become a plaster saint," he insisted.

All these traits were evident early on. He lived the depths and embraced the

heights and vice versa.

If he could not excel in something Crowley often abandoned it; an example is chess. At quite a young age he demonstrated world class potential in chess and was taken to an international tournament. The sight of all the eccentric old duffers shuffling about in shoddy clothes convinced him on the spot that pursuing a chess grand mastership appealed little. He wanted, even expected, much more of himself.

In his youth, Crowley strived to achieve the heights in three main areas: Mountain climbing, poetry, and spiritual development.

In mountain climbing he achieved several probable world records in his time, including the first assault on K2 and the record, 65 days, exposed on a glacier, but these were not officially recognized as, even this early in his life, his typical knack for pissing people off took precedence. By doing precisely as he wished and by failing to bother currying favor with established authorities he often undermined even his best efforts.

It was during these mountain excursions that a taste for sadism revealed itself, too, along with a tremendous capacity for hard work, endurance, and even suffering. To get what he wanted, Crowley was quite willing to batter others and himself mercilessly.

In poetry, Crowley was capable of both the heights of excellence and the plateaus of mediocrity and imitation. As one contemporary put it: "...His poetry could be very bad as well as very good...but he never seemed to know whether he was doing one or the other..." Most agree vanity was to blame for Crowley's uneven abilities, as he rarely bothered with second drafts or rewriting. Perhaps his experiences channeling communications from spirits taught him to respect the first draft; this anticipates by several decades the Beat esthetic epitomized by Jack Kerouac and Alan Ginsberg. And in the clarity, complexity, directness, and verve of his prose Crowley was among the best of the modernists, rivaling such luminaries as James Joyce, Ezra Pound, and D. H. Lawrence.

It was, however, in the area of spiritual development that Crowley shined brightest, and darkest. His explorations into magic as it was practiced in esoteric schools of thought around the world, his many retirements to the North African desert to refresh spiritual batteries, and his many encounters with beings of other dimensions — entities he called Aiwass and Horus and other holy names — all convinced him that he was the prophet of the New Aeon, when the Crowned Magical Child would usher in a new reality founded upon the basic tenets we remember to this day: Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. Love is the law, love under will.

To understand what is meant by these somewhat terrifying precepts, commands, or ravings, one must delve deeply into traditional esoteric magic and initiatory ceremonial magic and other forms of hidden reality. Even Crowley found several ways to misunderstand and misinterpret his own creed, even as he founded several orders — from the Argentum Astrum to the Thelema Abbey to the Ordo Templis Orienti and beyond. His understanding changed and matured, but at the core was something we now call sex magic, the use of sexual energy to reach spiritual states and insights. This was his central epiphany.

The Kama Sutra and Tantric Yoga are perhaps the two best known aspects of sex magic in Western awareness. Neither are well understood, but both offer a familiar jumping-off point to discuss the role sex magic played in Crowley's life. To summarize, it dominated him. To many he was but a drug-addled sex maniac, but in fact he was deadly serious about using sexual energy to boost consciousness into realms of Samadhi, Nirvana, and beyond. He desperately sought insight and wrote many erotic poems and passages offering encoded or oblique revelations in metaphor and simile. As lessons learned and as prescriptions for those with eyes to see who might follow, these writings of Crowley remain unparalleled and invaluable. They are also dangerous and misleading to dilettantes and neophytes.

Aleister Crowley's legacy goes beyond providing the likes of Somerset Maugham and Dennis Wheatley models for villains in novels; beyond scowling from the cover of the Beatles' SGT. PEPPER'S album; beyond providing Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page a collector's hobby and pastime; and beyond giving Ozzy Osbourne something to sing about. His influence surrounds us. In advertising, film, music, literature, art — his paintings anticipated the very best of the Expressionist and Brutarian schools with bold splashes of vibrant color and unsettling forms and portraits — Crowley's imagery and referents touch us many times each day. He remains a pivotal, compelling presence; he might have fared better had we tried to understand him primarily as an artistic type, rather than as an occultist, but that choice was largely his to make, and choose he did. Popular culture would be much different had Aleister Crowley not offered his imprint.

Incidentally, Stanley Kubrick's final film, *Eyes Wide Shut*, may well have been intended as a revelation of sex magic still being practiced today, but the released version is a hodge-podge of unfinished scenes, bad rehearsals, and pointless if beautiful images. Those numbed by it lacked context to sort out those hints, winks, and nudges, but the signals were

there for those with the code and it's a shame Kubrick died before making his final cut. And he died, please note, as mysteriously and conveniently, for some, as the prostitute in the movie.

Despite all this, however, the final word of the movie emphasizes a message Crowley would have recognized and applauded, even as it left most audiences bored, puzzled, and taken aback. And no, the word was not "Love," as the Beatles might have claimed. The word was an imperious command and a desperate plea: "Fuck." It may be our best, even our only, chance at redemption, is the message. All we need is love? Not quite.

Crowley snarled at mere love and insisted upon will, even as he trumped Nietzsche's atheism with a new theism focused on each of us. He meant that cognizance, being aware and willing things, is more important than a bland, mushy, all-encompassing hippie-dippie haze of lovey-dovey feelings. It allows each of us to aspire to godhood. Thelema comes from the Greek for "will," and his principles have informed discussions of a wide range of occult and religious endeavor, from Gnosticism and Sephiroth and Qabbalah studies to Rosicrucianism and even unto Anton Szandor LaVey's Church of Satan, silly as that bit of hedonism would have seemed to Crowley.

And yet, it was Crowley's willingness to play to the hilt the role of AntiChrist that early on saw him branded The Wickedest Man on Earth and so on. That he was bisexual in an age even less tolerant than our own did nothing to help Crowley's acceptance; he was alive during Oscar Wilde's public flogging over a homosexual affair, remember. Tolerance was not anyone's watchword.

Crowley was excoriated and pilloried by tabloids in England and in newspapers and magazines the world over in a campaign of bile unequaled even by the right-wing spew against Bill Clinton. It cost him his reputation as a gentleman, it cost him safe haven in many countries, and it ended up costing him even a chance at making a modest living as a writer. By the time the attacks had reached their heights of stridency and hysteria, Crowley lacked funds to bring lawsuits for libel and slander, and so he remained stoic, even devilishly insouciant, and modified his own behavior not a whit.

This too cost him, as few could afford the public castigation any link with him would bring. He ended up destitute much of his life, once he'd gone through the modest fortune he'd inherited, and he lived off sponging, frequent moves to duck dunning landlords, and the occasional sale of a bit of writing or his services as a teacher of magic tradition. His few followers contributed what they could, but it was very little.

Lawrence Sutin has now given us two biographies of men who claimed contact with higher intelligences. (Can L. Ron Hubbard be far behind in this string of investigations?) Visionaries, loons, or simply sad examples of genius gone awry — one's reaction to the subjects of his biographies is left to each reader, but it's compelling, important work on neglected, misconstrued, remarkable people that Sutin offers.

If there is any lack in *Do What Thou Wilt* it lies in the slender photograph section. As one reads, one craves glimpses of Crowley's many Scarlet Women, for instance, or the sight of his Abbey, decorated with original paintings and murals.

It is the signal accomplishment of Sutin's biography to have humanized Crowley. We are given many glimpses of the public image, yes, but the focus remains fixed beyond the lurid headlines, past the grandiose claims and outright lies to the man. He is understandable finally. Sutin's definitive account spares Crowley none of his many flaws and excesses, but it never picks them up to use as cudgels either. Neither awed nor contemptuous, Sutin's scholarly tone and brisk narrative offers us the chance to meet a truly interesting, often astounding mind and man named, mostly, Aleister Crowley.

Sutin's biography ends with lines penned by Crowley himself. Part of a poem, they might have served as epitaph on a tombstone, had Crowley been given a proper grave. Instead, his ashes were either buried under a tree or scattered among trees on a friend's estate in Hampton, New Jersey, depending on whom one believes.

Those words bear mention here as a pithy summation:

"He had the gift of laughing at himself.

Most affably he talked and walked with God.

And now the silly bastards on the shelf,

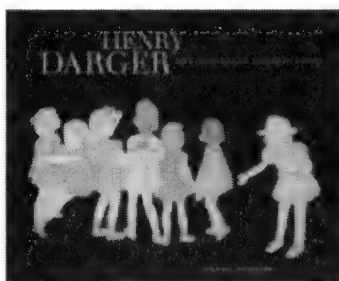
We've buried him beneath another sod."

-Gene Stewart

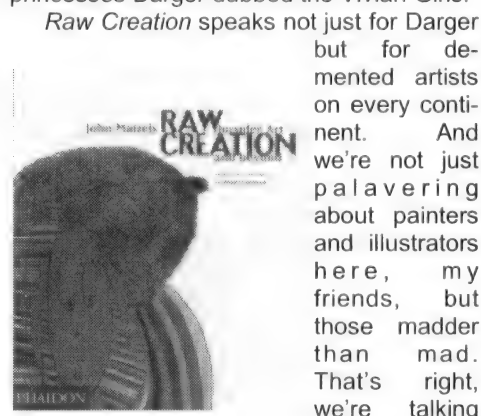
**Henry Darger:
Art And Selected Writings**
Michael Bonesteel
(2000) Rizolli

**Raw Creation:
Outsider Art and Beyond**
John Maizels, Roger Cardinal
(1996/2000) Phaidon

For the true Brutarian, one moved by any artistic endeavor of the untrained or the mad, we have two recently published works for you. *Henry Darger: Art and Selected Writings*, the first attempt to make sense of



the life and oeuvre of a man whose creative output was literally rescued from the dustbin. It was while cleaning out the rooms of a recently deceased tenant, sometime in 1973, that a landlord found a mound of unearthly watercolor drawings and more than fifteen thousand pages of typewritten musings. For some stranger reason, the landlord saved the material. The rest is history: international renown, ascension to Parnassus, an honored place in museums across the globe. For a man as mad as mad can be. A man concerned only with the war between a band of satanic generals and an angelic army of child slaves, led by seven princesses Darger dubbed the Vivian Girls.



Raw Creation speaks not just for Darger but for demented artists on every continent. And we're not just palavering about painters and illustrators here, my friends, but those madder than mad. That's right, we're talking crazed builders here, those who painstakingly slap together immense structures. Without bothering to get zoning permits! Like Kea Tawana who, over the course of four years, built an 80 foot long, three-story high arc in Newark, New Jersey from parts of abandoned buildings she demolished herself. The Newark Town Fathers declared the arc and eyesore and had it torn down, a puzzling decision as almost any building in Newark could be so described.

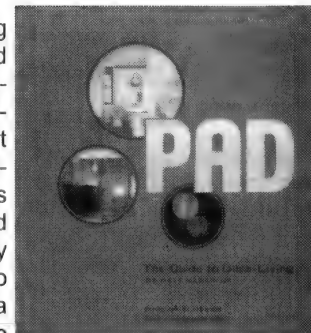
First published in 1996 in a pricey hardback edition, the publishers have finally seen fit to issue this seminal volume in a cheaper paperback format. Free of cant and the didacticism one so often encounters in scholarly art studies, *Raw Creation* is a fascinating and highly readable look at a genre seemingly without parameters.

-Dom Salemi

**Pad: The Guide
to Ultra Living**
Matt Maranian
(2000) Chronicle Books

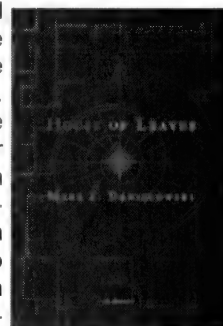
Or everything you learned about decorating from Martha Stewart and Architectural Digest is wrong. *Pad* modestly claims only to be an idea book for those

seeking to decorate on the cheap; but really, it aspires to something much more sublime: a primer on what is hip, far out and just plain cool. ("Pad" was originally coined as a hip reference for a room where people gathered to take narcotics.) It's aim is to teach you new things about color coordination, matching furniture and accessories, clutter as decoration. You may not come away from the guide with a "new and improved" sense of style but you will end up with a better understanding of what style "is not." Toward that end, there are building projects, e.g., the opium den flame pit, Hawaiian eye swag lights; suggestions on making the most of limited space; and helpful hints on decorating broken, twisted things. There are pad profiles too, illustrations of how ordinary men and women, many with absolutely no taste whatsoever, nevertheless managed to turn an obsession — the Tiki Bar, the Oriental furniture store, Mondrian — into a unified personal aesthetic. Our favorite chapter, "Living Wombs," finds the author rolling up his sleeves and showing us that even those possessing the otherworldly tastes of a Barbarella can achieve their dreams with little more than a gallon of paint, tasteful lighting and a few swatches of synthetic fur. Includes recipes for exotic punches. And for disaster.



House Of Leaves
Mark Z. Danielewski
(2000) Pantheon

Here's the deal: Will Navidson, a prize-winning photojournalist, and his long-time significant other, Karen Green, move with their youngsters Chad and Daisy from the urban jungle to the wilds of rural Virginia. They buy an old house on Ash Tree Lane for their rural outpost, a nice little country retreat. Navidson, a workaholic who also uses the camera as a shield against commit-



ment, mounts a slew of Hi 8s around the house to film a documentary of their settling into this new, slower lifestyle. "No gunfire, famine, or flies. Just lots of toothpaste, gardening and people stuff." He is even given a Guggenheim and an NEA grant to do it.

But his bucolic shots of countryside and kinder gradually deteriorate into domestic avalanche when the family returns one day to discover that the master bedroom inexplicably has grown a new door, as if a mad carpenter has broken in while they were out. Behind the door is a dark seemingly miles-long corridor of stairs and dead ends — really odd considering the offending door is mounted on what is an exterior wall. Things rapidly deteriorate; periodically, an unearthly growl emanates from the nether regions behind the door. The county police decline to get involved as they can't see what crime, if any, has been committed.

But the real problem is Navidson, the rabid uber-photojournalist, who must explore and film and document, instead of getting the hell out like any normal person who's already seen this horror movie would do. So Karen, his claustrophobic and co-dependent partner, sticks it out too. His estranged brother, Tom, even comes to help, as do ultimately some professional explorers until, tragedy time — first Tom, then the kids (the real victims of this dysfunctional bunch) ultimately get lost in the other-dimensional black hole. Blame it all on the realtor (that's right — the old Amityville Horror plot) who doesn't bother to tell Navidson that the circa-1720 house has gone through lots of occupants "approximately .37 owners every year" and all were traumatized in some way. Your sacred Indian burial grounds and all that shit, with some obvious references to Greek and Norse mythology mashed in for good measure.

Danielewski presents the trials of Navidson as a "forbidden document" in the hands of a third party — so we are supposed to read the story of the house through the eyes and mind of another character, Johnny Truant. Truant is a brain-fried tattoo parlor assistant, who acquired "The Navidson Record" from a blind old man who lived and then died mysteriously in his apartment complex. Confused yet? Well, wait till you see the copious footnotes and asides and try to wade through Truant's tedious first person ramblings, a detailed repetitive journal of his wasted days of drugging and random fucking interspersed with comic book philosophy.

Primarily, *House of Leaves* seems to be a post-modern exercise in documents, in writing about writing, about making a record of... whatever. It first appeared as hyper-text fiction on the internet. The mingling of forms and formats here won't be a surprise to anyone familiar with post-modern fiction. The plot, as mentioned, is certainly not new. What is creepy about it is Danielewski's setting up of the rape of security, of intimacy — the horror coming home to roost first for the Navidsons, then for Truant, then ostensibly, for the reader. A home invasion set in the Twilight Zone. But don't expect the kind of payoff the ludicrously exaggerated blurbs on the cover claim. Though moderately scary in parts, it's boring in many others. And no, no, no, Danielewski is not in this lifetime (as Brett Easton Ellis laughably claims on the back cover) going to be worshiped by the awed likes of "Thomas Pynchon, J.G. Ballard, Stephen King, and David Foster Wallace." Brett needs to get his dosages checked.

In short, *House of Leaves* is more hype and filler than goods delivery. But it will appeal to certain readers, the credulous and inexperienced, who'll probably treat HOL like the Dead Sea Scrolls meets the Holy Crail, until the next literary fad kicks in. So if you want to be With It, kids, some suggestions: First and most important: DO NOT spend \$40 on the hardcover edition of this book. You will kick yourself. But the paperback version or better yet, check it out from the library. Then, begin reading the introduction and the Navidson Record section. After a few chapters, start skipping the fake footnotes (they get longer and more self-indulgent as the book goes on; sometimes there are several pages of lists of names of made-up writers and bibliographies which are only occasionally interesting or enlightening. Maybe Danielewski is actually serious about all this stuff... or maybe he's created a satire of English graduate school dissertations in PoMo studies.)

Also, unless you are an urban anthropologist or habitually fascinated by the shallow musings of lower life forms, skim the Hohnny Truant sections. The appendix that contains letters from Truant's institutionalized mother was pretty good, though. But maybe Danielewski should have spent less time on all those footnotes, or in the tenth dimension, and more on making the characters at least three-dimensional. Ultimately, Navidson's is only part of the book that really matters — the beating heart of the story, it does hold some elemental, lost-in-the-dark shivers, heavily influenced by H.P. Lovecraft and Mr. King.

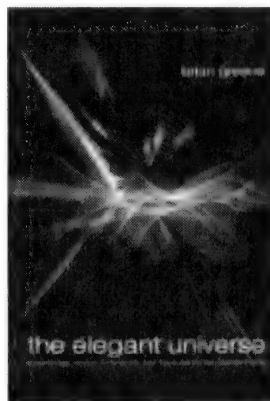
Just be aware that this has not only been done, it's been done better. Don't fall for all the hype and blow your whole allowance — this book will not change your life, or make you a better person, or even a worse one. If you really crave creepy, well-written, sleep-with-the-lights-on literature about horrific real estate, check out Hodgeson's *House on the Borderland*, Michael MacDowell's *The Elementals*, or *A Face at the Window* by Dennis McFarland, a truly talented author who doesn't need to resort to gimmicks and props to scare the living bejesus out of you.

-Lenore Hart

The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory

Brian Greene

(1999) W. W. Norton & Company



Well, I guess the title pretty much says it all, eh? I just love books about the mysteries of the cosmos and this has got to be the best take on this psychotic subject I've ever read. Takes a near impossible to explain (much less make interesting for the lay reader) and succeeds in serving it up to you in delicious bite sized nuggets. Nothing hard to swallow. No sharp edges. No stale smell.

Boys and girls, there's a "whale" of a lot more going on all around you than you could imagine in your worst strawberry ice cream and pickle pizza nightmare. That is: Nothing, that's right, nothing, be what

it appears to be. Things sitting around like a bump on a log are just "hammering" along with unseen activity, down deep in their fundamental innards. A whole raft of impossibly tiny places that things can go, the like of which you and I can not even begin to conceive!

Sparingly illustrated in black and white with addendum that really helps clarify the text, but only when it's needed. No clutter. And, as a special bonus, it's got the very best description of the loony effects of relativity (especially the "why" parts) I've ever read. Hell, that part alone is worth the cost of the whole book.

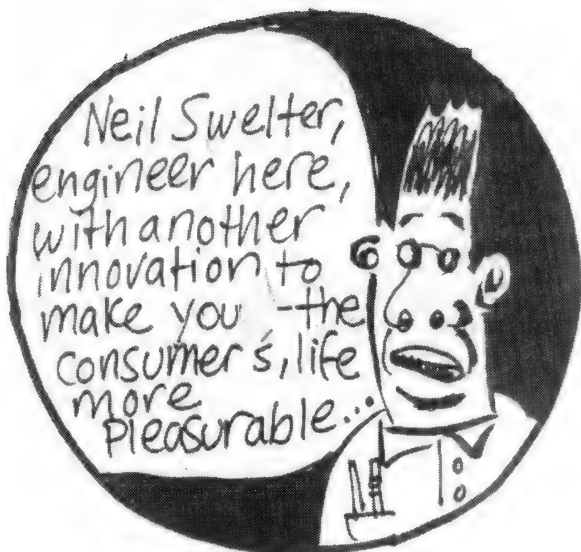
-James MacLaren

BQ

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Audio Deprivation

Hasil Adkins: Poultry In Motion (Norton)

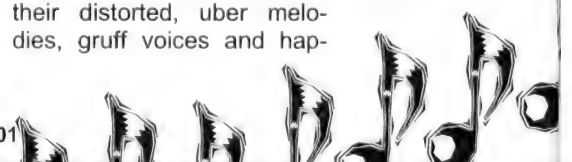
Now THIS is my idea of a great concept album! At the very least, it's the best since Porter Wagoner cut those three LP's in the 60's with all the songs about drinking wine or getting drunk or burning down bars (with his alter-ego Skid Row Joe the wino adorning the cover of each).

Admittedly, this new treat from the Haze is really a compilation of 15 tunes recorded from 1956 to 1999 (and I defy anybody to tell the difference between the old and new stuff, aside from the tell-tale scratchy noises on the former!). Although I never would have guessed it, Hasil apparently only recorded 9 songs about chicken prior to '99 (the most famous being "Chicken Walk", but also the "Chicken Twist", "Chicken Flop", "Chicken Shake" and so on...you get the picture). In order to complete this project, the Hunchin' Man went into the studio and cut another 6 new gems about his favorite subject — "Chicken Hunch," "Chicken Run," "Chicken Blues," "Chicken On The Bone" (in which he babbles about buying chicken at McDonalds (!?!)), "Pick That Chicken", and "Cookin' Chicken." All stone killer classics from a true musical icon, and fuckin' nut, to boot! To quote Nick Tosches — "Like the Bible and toilet paper, the music of Hasil Adkins belongs in every household, and none is a home without it". How true.

-John Oliver

ANTiSEEN: Southern Hostility/ Eat More Possum (Man's Ruin)

A rudimentary knowledge of chording, a unhealthy preoccupation with dementia, the sordid and the worst excesses of professional wrestling and, viola: a movement was born. SCUM rock. Now some twenty years and fifty releases down the road we are invited to listen to the two epochal works leading to this musical insurrection. Underlying it all: the unfettered belief in giving nothing but the lowest quality to the moment in passing so as to give us a dulled, hopeless disgust with life. And much laughter. With their distorted, uber melodies, gruff voices and hap-



hazard rhythms, ANTISEEN pushed punk into the far end of strangeness which is where, as Dubuffet once noted, is the chance to find the key to things.

-Dom Salemi

Johnny Cash: Cash

(Columbia)

Give swarthy country parvenu Rick Rubin his due, this is his third shot with Johnny and he's come through with flying colors each time. Unfortunately, the color of this effort is that of surrender. I hate using the personal address but maybe it will help to shed a little light on this thing. Yeah, I've had a couple of beers and I've listened to this disc a number of times and I just can't wrap myself around it. It's not like I'm not a fan of yours, Mr. Cash; I've got over twenty of your records and three Bear Family multi-disc box sets. And I know you're a legend in the country music field and you've been real sick lately, Johnny, but that's no reason to just sit and pick. It may work at a church social but if you're gonna do Neil Diamond and Tom Petty and U2 songs you've got to give us a reason for listening. Bring us a little fire, show a little passion, open up a can of whup-ass when singing about how proud you are to be "country trash." OK, you're nearing the end of the road, I understand; still no reason to go gentle into that good night. You're the man in black, remember? Taking the sins of the world on your back. So we, I, expect your old age to burn and flame at the close of day. And to rage, rage at the dying of the light.

-Dom Salemi

Diesel Park West: Thought For Food

(Hypertension - import)

Singer/songwriter John Butler and his Leicester-based band Diesel Park West have been around since about 1987, putting out catchy, hook & harmony-laden, 12 string-jangly pop music that's a mixture of The Byrds/Moby Grape/Buffalo Springfield/Hollies, to usually great critical reviews in the UK, but sales totals that make one wonder why these guys keep on keepin' on.

"Thought For

Food" is their 7th full-length release featuring Butler's top shelf singing and tunesmithing, with my only complaint being that his voice sometimes tends to closely resemble that of U2's Bono (not a good thing, in my opinion). The lead cut here, "Satellite Day" could have come from an early U2 album — a minor quibble, all things considered. All in all, while a solid effort, this CD would not be my choice for an introduction to the band. A better starter for a DPW newbie would be "Left Hand Band: The Very Best of Diesel Park West" from 1997 — 16 shimmering pop gems from their first 10 years. Special kudos to the band for their great cover on the new CD of the Skip Spence classic from "Oar," "Little Hands." For that matter, they did a great job with their Byrdsy take of "All Come To Meet Her" on last year's Spence tribute CD, "More Oar." There simply ain't enough Moby Grape fanatics in this world for me.

-John Oliver

Scott Dunbar: From Lake Mary

(Fat Possum)

It doesn't get more authentic than this. First of all, the guy is dead which makes him historical. Secondly, Scott Dunbar was black and in his sixties when this was recorded and, as we all know, nobody does the blues better than an old Afro-American. Especially when they're the sons of ex-slaves and were born and lived their entire lives in the Mississippi Delta.

Okay, have we established the man's blues credentials to your satisfaction? Thought so. Now add to all of that the fact that the man draws all sorts of amazing colors out of that beat-up six string of his and doesn't need nothing but his own foot stomping on a bare wood floor for company. Lord can Dunbar play. It's the singing, though, that will stay with you. Keening, moaning, now scrambling into the upper register, you can almost see the little boy inside the man casting about for the appropriate voice to give proper expression to the wondrous cause of his own wonder. And in the process helping to create song as subtle, complex and as full of mysterious life as the body of a flower or of a woman.

-Dom Salemi

Tav Falco & The Panther Burns: Panther Phobia

(In The Red)

Somewhere between rock and a plodding pace lies the stuff that is Tav Falco. Over a long and unstoried career this devotee of 50s Memphis has released a score of unremarkable albums and still managed to build a devoted cult following. A large part of this is the result of Robert Palmer's seminal musical study, *It Came From Memphis*, in which Tav was singled out for special mention; however, a larger part must be attributed to the fact that Tav possesses little talent, and what's more, seems quite proud of the lack thereof. It's as if he decided long ago that Yeats was right and that the worst are full of passionate intensity and the "best" lack all conviction. So Mr. Falco has made a career out of dampening down rockabilly and swamp blues and self-consciously singing with the utmost emotional detachment. It sounds boring but it's not, listening to Tav blandly crooning Howling Wolf's "Going Home" or sedately assaying Charlie Feathers' "Cockroach" is like being in a juke joint for psychotic middle class white. Curious then, that we find Tav raging against the bourgeoisie in the discs most unruly cut, "Panther Phobia Manifesto," as this is the very audience he's going for.

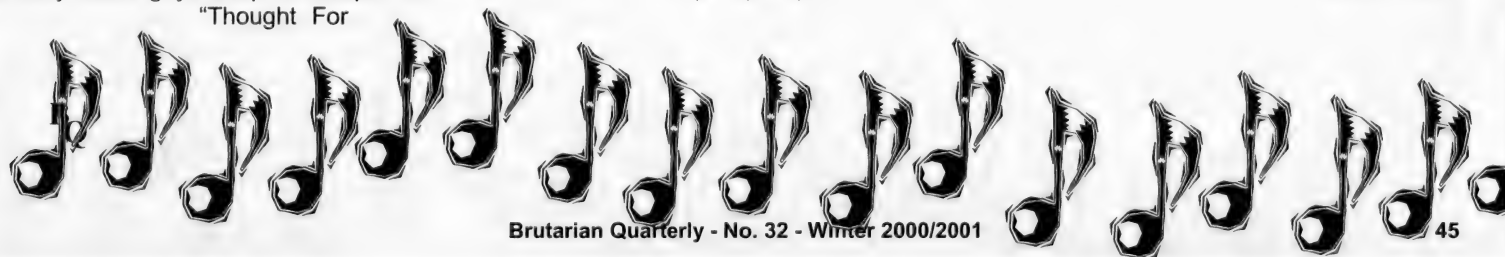
-Dom Salemi

Groove Armada: Back To Mine

(Ultra)

Man! This sho nuff is funky! Its got that get-up and go-go groove. Also the go-to as they used to say in 'Lizabethan times. Got the get-ya blah-blahs out too! "Course y'all could probably fashion such an equally laid back groove if the likes of Al Green, Barry White et al. would let you throw down your two cents with their three. Still, we'll leave you to ponder the definition of composition by way of remixin' while we light the scented candles, draw the Mr. Bubbled bath, slap this masterful mix of infectious mid-tempo rhythms and sweet talkin' on the player and start preparin' to get down and get loose with our latest papoose!

-Dom Salemi





Merle Haggard If I Could Only Fly

(Anti/Epitaph)

One of the oddest things I thought I'd ever see or hear about was the pairing of Johnny Cash with Beastie Boys' producer Rick Rubin on his last 3 efforts. Well... now I've heard of something even stranger: Merle Haggard signing with Epitaph Records! What's next? Buck Owens on Estrus or George Jones on Rip-Off, maybe? However little sense this seems to make, Hag's latest CD is the best thing he's done in years. Basically all new original tunes, it's a low-key, well-sung and played set of some of the best songs he's written since the late 80's. Merle's been all but ignored by C&W radio and Nashville throughout most of the 90's, after having about 253 Number 1 country hits in the 60's - 80's (actually, I think the real number's about 38, but that's still damn impressive!). I understand he's suing former label head Mike Curb for a wide variety of offenses, including failure to promote most of his 90's releases. (That Curb fellow sure gets around; Davie Allan hates him too!) But back to the new CD — you know this isn't the old Hag when his first song on the CD ("Wishing All These Old Things Were New") starts off with a line about a friend snorting cocaine. Later, the Bob Wills-like "Bareback" appears to be about using condoms... truly not the kind of thing they record in Nashville. His newest band of Strangers is great, with special props to guitarist and George "Crybaby" Cannon (70's wrestling manager) look-a-like Redd Volkaert — his best guit-picker since Roy Nichols. Hag's singing has never been more expressive. Highly recommended. (By the way, that scary close-up photo of him in the CD booklet — My God! I've only seen two things in my life comparable to that photo — the Matthew Brady extra close close-up photo of Abe Lincoln from 1864/1865, and Ted Kennedy's face (sans make-up) in person about 5-6 years ago!... then again, I'm not counting any Bukowski photos...)

-John Oliver

Beau Jocque: Give Him Cornbread, Live!

(Rounder)

Any doubts as to whether Acadians can, indeed rock, will be quickly and completely dispelled by *Cornbread, Live!* in which Beau, fighting for his professional life, takes on fellow Louisianan, Boozoo Chavis, for the undisputed heavyweight championship of the Cajun music world. The accordion, Beau's instrument of choice, has a limited tonal palette and can quickly grate on the nerves with its wheezy jocularity; Jocque's genius is allow his squeezebox to be reduced to a purely rhythmic role or to let it drop out completely. This allows his Howlin'-Wolf-like yowl or incendiary bass and drum tandem of Chuck Burks and Steve Chalot to take center stage. Of course this might be a strategy employed by all accordion-fronted bands but we kind of doubt Mick Jagger and Keith Richards would, as the liner notes attest, have forked out five dollars just to hear a run-of-the-mill zydeco band.

-Dom Salemi

The Monks: Let's Start A Beat!

The Standells: Ban This!

(Live At Cavestomp '99)
(Varese Sarabande)

Here we have live sets by two of the headlining bands from last year's Cavestomp in NYC. In each case, the CD's are by 60's acts who faded into obscurity over the past 3+ decades...and in each case, the band acquits themselves nicely with a sweaty, rocking live set.

The Monks are one of the true 60's cult bands — a bunch of American GI's in Germany in the mid 60's, who formed a band, shaved their heads and dressed like monks, and

released

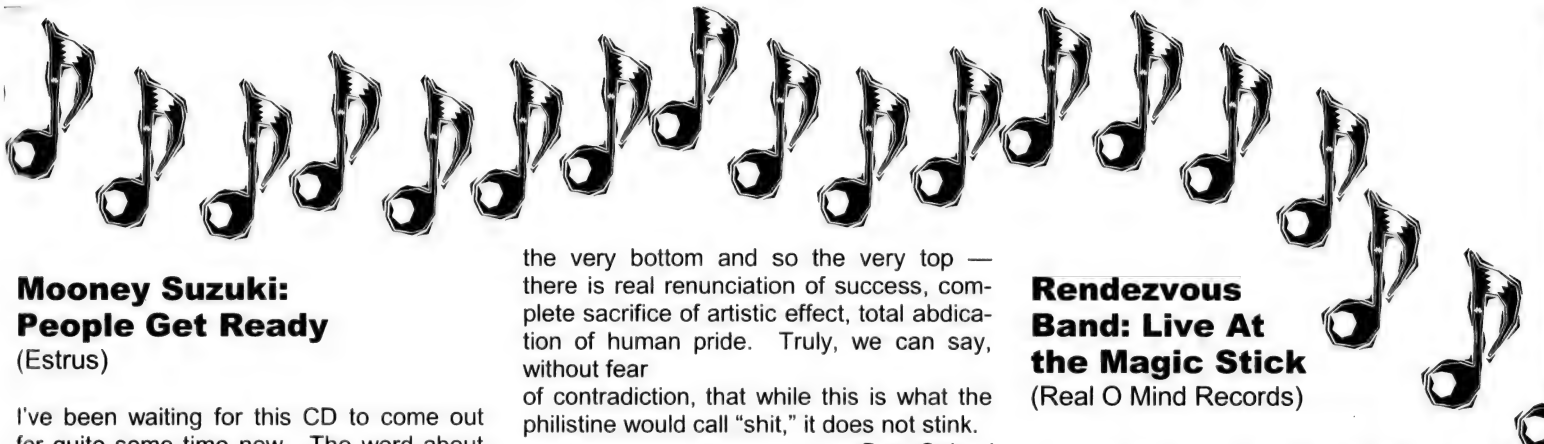
one of the most truly original, idiosyncratic LP's in the history of Rock & Roll, "Black Monk Time," which everyone either loves with a passion or hates... assuming they've heard it. While various experts over the years have credited them with being forerunners of the late 70's punk movement, to me their music sounds like nothing else on Earth - ample use of feedback, blaring organ, thumping bass and drums, a banjo plunking away in the background, seemingly idiotic lyrics half-sung, half-screamed, with equally dumb song titles ("Hushie Pushie," "Higgle-Dy, Piggledy," "Oh How We Do," etc.). This is angry, angular music, with much more emphasis on the beat than the melody. And, I'm happy to report, the original Monks sounded pretty much the same last year in NYC. If you like "Black Monk Time," you'll dig their new live CD.

The Standells, on the other hand, were pretty much your typical 60's garage/punk band from LA from well-to-do roots (Keyboard player Larry Tamblin is actor Russ Tamblyn's brother; another was an ex-Mouseketeer). Starting out as a clean-cut folky and Top 40 covers band (not unlike the Byrds, Love, etc.), they were introduced to songwriter Ed Cobb, who, along with suggesting that they grow their hair long and emulate the Rolling Stones, also penned most of their 60's hits — "Dirty Water," "Sometimes Good Guys Don't Wear White," "Riot On Sunset Strip" (from the B-movie of the same name), and the controversial, banned "Try It." They played every 60's TV music show and then some (including appearances on The Munsters and in the aforementioned movie "Riot On Sunset Strip"). Three of the numerous Standells from the 60's showed up at Cavestomp. While several of their oldies on this new set sound a bit slowed down to these ears, the band nonetheless played with one Hell of a lot of intensity that night. Just don't look at the recent photos of the band in the CD booklet while listening (time is NOT on their side!)

Two enjoyable CD's for 60's fans or old farts everywhere. Of the two, I prefer The Monks' set... but then again, there simply isn't that much recorded output from this strange band!

-John Oliver





Mooney Suzuki: People Get Ready (Estrus)

I've been waiting for this CD to come out for quite some time now. The word about the Mooney Suzuki first leaked out about 2 years ago, usually couched in superlatives like "best unsigned band in NYC," "best live show

I've ever seen," "best live band anywhere — they blew away the headliners," etc. So how is their debut long player? Pretty damn impressive! They remind me of the early Who (manic Moon-like drumming throughout), Creation, MC5, and, among more recent bands, maybe the Swingin' Neckbreakers - heady company, in my opinion. These guys start rocking like mad on the first track, and they don't let up throughout all 12 songs — even on the slow ones, like the closer, the gospel-tinged "Everytime." Great songs, great playing and singing, very exciting music — one of the best releases of 2000. I'm sure they kill live!

—John Oliver

MZ. Pak Man: Oh Shit, it's MZ. Pak Man! (Slut)

We have seen the future of rock and roll and it most definitely is not MZ. Pak Man. Of course, how can we, with our limited sense and our circumscribed intelligence, profess to absolute knowledge of truth and goodness? It is, after all, only superficial, limited creatures, rash, feather-brained souls who demand the purpose of this or that thing, the ultimate significance of the finished work which is put in front of them.

Great genius does not come to final conclusions so we must make note that most of these primitive D.I.Y. stylings are unfinished. Knowing, too, that even the loveliest of melodies becomes unlistenable once the public starts humming it and the elevators start playing it, the female quartet herein largely dispenses with melody. With key and pitch, too, for that matter. At bottom — and this is

the very bottom and so the very top — there is real renunciation of success, complete sacrifice of artistic effect, total abdication of human pride. Truly, we can say, without fear of contradiction, that while this is what the philistine would call "shit," it does not stink.

—Dom Salemi

Vernon Oxford: Let Me Sing You A Song (Westside)

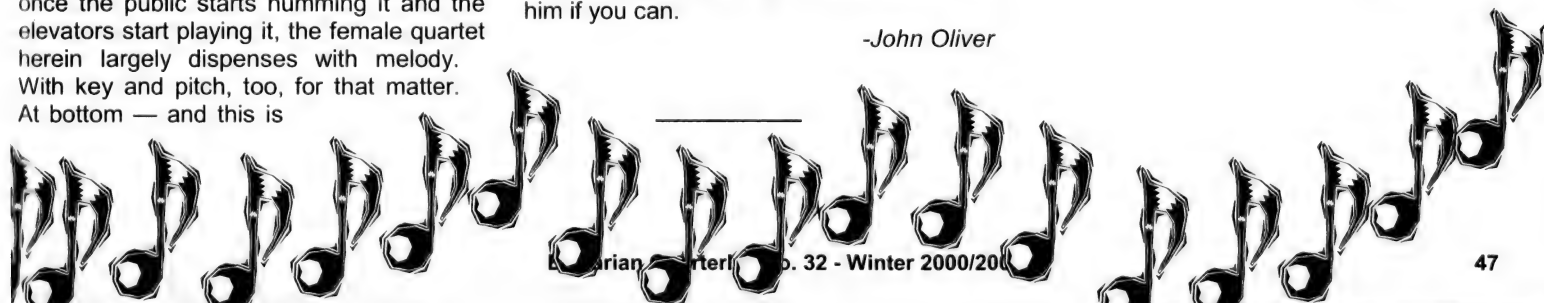
Prior to the release of this CD, the only way to hear this man's music (other than tracking down his old, impossible-to-find LP's) was to fork over wads of dough for his "Keeper of the Flame" 5 CD box set on Bear Family. It's about time! Vernon Oxford moved from his native Arkansas to Nashville in the mid 60's, with the sole intent of becoming a C&W singing star. Turned down by every record label in town, and kept off the Grand Ole Opry stage for being "too country," his fortunes turned around when he met and befriended Nashville's #1 songwriter, Harlan Howard, who gave him some of his newer songs to record. Armed with such ammo, RCA signed him...and the results of his work in their studios is on this here just-released CD. The best (and only) way to describe Vernon's music is hard core honky tonk, and the phrase "too country" fits his voice and singing like a glove (think a slightly lower pitched Webb Pierce). At least eight or nine lesser known Harlan Howard classics are here, including "Watermelon Time in Georgia," "Woman, Let Me Sing You A Song," "Goin' Home," and the too-maudlin-for words "Old Folks Home." They should have been huge hits, but the only C&W chart action I remember from Oxford was the fair-sized novelty hit "Redneck" from around '73, which didn't hold a candle to anything on this set. This is classic stuff — if you consider yourself an old-time country fan, pick this up. Also, Vernon is still alive and kicking and playing occasionally. See him if you can.

—John Oliver

Rendezvous Band: Live At the Magic Stick (Real O Mind Records)

I remember Dave Champion telling me over a year ago that the three remaining members of the legendary Sonic's Rendezvous Band from the 70's were reuniting with Deniz Tek (Radio Birdman) manning the former guitar slot of the late Fred "Sonic" Smith, to play some live shows. Sonic's Rendezvous were, without a doubt, one of the all-time great Detroit bands (or from anywhere else, for that matter), comprised of former MC5 guitarist/vocalist Smith, Ex-Rational and blue-eyed soulster Scott Morgan on vocals/guitar, Gary Rasmussen (The Up) on bass, and former Stooge Scott Asheton on the drum throne. Sadly, they spent practically all of their time in the late 70's on the road doing live gigs — the only recording they ever laid down in the studio was the classic single "City Slang". Smith's untimely death in 1990 ensured the band would never be heard from again... or so we thought. Over the past several years, various late 70's live shows of the SRB have appeared on CD and LP, and Patti Smith (Fred's widow and Punk Goddess) apparently has tons of their material in the can, waiting for the right time to release it. In the meantime, here's a live show from Detroit in Sept. 1999, recorded and produced by the esteemed Mr. Champion (hey Dave — why isn't this on Nomad Records?) ... and it sounds great! Deniz Tek is a more than capable replacement for Sonic, probably one of the only guitarists who could pull this off so smoothly (ex-MC5er Wayne Kramer also comes to mind). It's an ass-kicking show that was obviously a lot of fun to watch and hear (and for the band to play). The band roars through all of their old live favorites, and toss in a couple of surprises — covers of the Stooges' "Dirt" and Radio Birdman's "New Race." Limited to 1,000 copies — buy it if you can find it.

—John Oliver



Rhythm Doctors Reggae Injection

Youth, San Francisco residency and born again Christianity are hardly the ingredients for making effective ska and reggae, but hey, here it be: boldly loping baselines, fractured funkified organ, steady-as-she-goes guitar-drum tandem. There's even a nice syn-copated cocktail hour So. Cal samba thing here. Best of all, though — okay, aside from the snappy carnivalesque tunes — is the total absence of vocals! That's right, no annoying American affectations getting in the way of YOUR pleasure. Of which there is much to be had on an Injection, that, like all the best drugs, will have you dancing in your head.

-Dom Salemi

Silver Ginger 5: Black Leather Mojo

(Phono - Japanese Import)

While the Silver Ginger 5 is now a touring band, this CD is essentially the debut solo outing by David Walls, AKA Ginger, former front man and songwriter for The Wildhearts, one of the very best rocking pop Brit bands of the 90's. Best described as a marriage of Cheap Trick, Guns 'N' Roses, and Metallica, the Wildhearts recorded a slew of great catchy singles ("Nothing Ever Changes But the Shoes," "TV Tan," "I Wanna Go Where The People Go," "Just In Lust," etc.) that skimmed the UK charts from '93 - '97, while never coming close to being released, let alone hits, over here. Now, frankly, they didn't do much to help their chances for commercial success by recording songs such as "Greetings From Shitsville" or "My Baby Is A Headfuck," or showing up in drag for concerts, or releasing a painful-to-listen-to LP in '97, "Endless Namesless," best described as loud industrial noise with screechy vocals.

The band split up numerous times, most recently in '99. "Black Leather Mojo" represents the initial recording by front man Ginger since this last split. He's still writing very poppy, hook-laden tunes, but production-wise, he's eschewed the BIG rock & roll guitar sound of his last band for a much denser sound, reminiscent of ABBA and Roy Wood's Wizzard, with some Gary Glitter glam tossed in. About half of the songs on this new CD could easily be big hits, if they're played (or if the red-haired pretty boy makes an MTV-friendly video that goes over). The only misstep is an awful remake of the Bee Gees' "To Love Somebody," that seems very out of place, with hundreds of backing voices in the choruses.

Recommended for Wildhearts fans, with the caution that this doesn't rock as hard as most of their material (but I understand Ginger's live band does).

-John Oliver

Sparks: Balls (Oglio)

Personally, I've given up all hope of the Mael brothers (AKA Sparks — as they're the entire band now, it seems) ever returning to their early 70's quirky rocking roots. Former Hitler/Chaplin look-a-like Ron seems to be having way too much fun screwing around with synthesizers and tape loops and drum machines, making dance music.

Russell appears to be content to sing whatever Ron writes for him. Admittedly, this is great dance music, with hard-to-forget melodies and much more intelligent lyrics than you'll likely find elsewhere... but I'd love for Sparks to make just one more screwy R&R album like "Kimono My House" or "Propaganda" or "Indiscreet" ... perhaps I dwell too much in the past? Part of my disappointment lies with the fact that I've seen tapes of recent live Sparks shows, and yes, they DO include ample helpings of gems from their older LP's in

their live sets, along with the always-pleasing comedy bits by Ron. Oh, well... at least the band keeps my interest enough that I'll always buy whatever they choose to put out... along with the other 75 or so of us in this country.

-John Oliver

Speedball Baby: Uptight (In The Red)

Damn, we had a great review here but we lost it. What we remember saying is that the band is from New York and plays rock blues so damaged that it puts other blues damage acts to shame. Not that there are that many blues damage acts out there. So this makes Speedball Baby kind of unique. We also recall saying something about how their psychobilly stuff errs more on the side of Jerry Lee Lewis at his most deranged than on the side of the Cramps at their most affected. We thought that last bit was a pretty snappy piece of rock criticism. Leaning more to Lester Bangs in his cough-syrup phase than Richard Meltzer in his acid-with-beer-chaser phase.

-Dom Salemi

T. Valentine: Hello Lucille... Are You A Lesbian? (Norton)

Another real find from those kooks at Norton — the long-forgotten Chicago R&B cult artiste T. Valentine, known primarily for his bizarre 45, "Hello Lucille... Are You A Lesbian?" which he penned and cut as a kiss-off to one of his ex-girlfriends after hearing Josie Cotton's "Johnny Are You Queer?" on the radio in the early 80's. I kinda expected the stomping R&B rockers like "Teenage Jump" and "Do The Do," and I expected the over-the-top weirdness of the title track, "Little Lu-Lu Frog" and the crazy "Vampire Radio Spot." On the other hand, I

was not expecting the heavy social commentary of "Wake Up Wake Up Black Man," "Black Power Part 1&2," or "Massius Ray," a song to Cassius Clay about his draft dodging. Not much of a singer... okay, I'm being charitable, he's pretty bad!... If Ed Wood were still alive and making transvestite movies, most of this stuff would fit in perfectly as soundtrack music. I understand Mr. Valentine still plays live off and on. I believe a double bill pairing Andre Williams and T. Valentine would hit the spot.

-John Oliver

Various Artists: Estrus 100% Apeshit Rock Sampler Vol. 2 (Estrus)

How a tiny label in a tiny town continues to find, much less attract such genuine American primitives is a mystery. Regardless, we've computed the chances of this compilation being successful based on the following formula: Average number of keeper cuts per disc released (80%) times compiler's previous success rate (90%) which gives us 72% which makes absolutely no sense. Therefore, we will leave you with this: there are twenty-four cuts here most of which involve much slovenly shouting over rockin', kick-ass riffs. Some of these riffs are guitar driven, some are organ driven. Most of this falls into the garage rock category, save for the Crown Royals who play fine 60s-styled polk-salad (not too down home for white tastes) funk and the Lord High Fixers who rock but cannot be categorized. There are three undeniably great combos here — Quadrajets, Sugar Shack, The Coyotemen — and one who will shortly have greatness thrust upon them: Watts. The other aggregations show tremendous promise, i.e. an insane inattention to detail and unconcern with the concerns of the masses.

-Dom Salemi

**Various Artists:
Our Favorite Texan
Bobby Fuller
Four-ever**
(Number 9 Records—
Japanese Import)

I'd been looking for this gem for about 6 months or so (only available as Japanese import), when I finally found a copy via an eBay auction... and it was worth what I paid for it! The cream of the crop of power pop — Marshall Crenshaw, Bill Lloyd, the Young Fresh Fellows, Walter Clevenger, Jamie Hoover (Spongetones and Van DeLecki's), Smithereens' offshoot band Buzzed Meg, the Incredible Casuals, former Bongo Richard Barone, the Liquor Giants, and others — doing, for the most part, fairly faithful renditions of Bobby Fuller Four classics. Great songs, great versions... highlights include a mandolin-laced acoustic version of "I Fought the Law" by the Brothers Figaro, Lloyd's "Let Her Dance," Buzzed Meg's "Love's Made A Fool Of You" (Fuller version, not Buddy Holly's), and local DC artiste Kevin Johnson's "Another Sad and Lonely Night," among others. Another tribute album that doesn't suck.

Hopefully, it'll be released domestically soon. To quote Marshall Crenshaw, Bobby Fuller was everybody's choice as their "favorite 60's star that got murdered by the Mafia."

-John Oliver

**Various Artists:
Traditional Fiddle
Music of the
Ozarks Vols 1-3**
(Rounder)

Yes'm, it's a beautiful day here in the hills of historic Accokeek, Maryland (just a stone's throw from Indian Head Highway) and I'm out here tippin' a little and list'nin' to this here fiddle music. Sittin' in my ha' chair. Call it that 'cause one of the legs done broke off so now it ain't now much more than a

half a chair, don'cha know? ... so's I'm listin' while list'nin and I can hardly half believe what a wonderment this Ozark fiddle music be.

The folks at the record company, though, ask me to think Hollywood. Get to picturin' the old wooden school room cleared, all the chairs pushed up against the wall and folks looking like that twisted white thing from Deliverance comin' from far and wide to do that clunky kind of dancin'. Me? I'm outside in the woods throwin' up. What I want with music made by inbreed racist hillbillies? You probably thinkin' the same. Listen, here, though, this ain't the same. That's the wrong way of thinkin' about this'n here. These people too full of joy to think bad thoughts. About anybody.

Black or white. Seem a might complex too, at times. *Volume One: Along the Eastern Crescent*, finds our violinists making plumb earnest use of discord and unusual tunings. Whooo doggies! Favorite of mine, don'cha know, is *Volume Three: Down in the Border Counties*. It's the intensest of the whole shebang with tunes favorin' more on riffs than unified melody. Disjointed and rugged as all get out. Just the tonic for soothing the sorrow that oftener sets in when the sun starts to move down behind the hills and it's another day's gone and you've just been settin' there.

-Dom Salemi

**Vice Principals
After School With...**
(Sympathy For the Record Industry)

In case you were wondering what happened to The Humpers, here's two of 'em — singer Scott "Deluxe" Drake and guitarist Billy Burks have joined forces with Jeff Drake (no relation, I think), formerly of The Joneses, and a couple of other reprobates to form The Vice Principals. Punk rock with tunefulness a-plenty — I'm tempted to say that it's the perfect cross between the boozed up brawling rock of The

Humpers and the Glam-tinged Johnny Thunders-like song stylings of The Joneses... but that would be too easy!... although it IS a perfect description of their sound. Great covers of "Jack The Ripper" and the Dave Clark Five's "Glad All Over," along with one of the all-time best song titles ever in "When Girls Collide." Buy it, you'll like it!

-John Oliver

**Keith Whitley
Sad Songs
and Waltzes**
(Rounder)

Although you've probably never heard of him, Keith Whitley is supposedly the — not one of the, *the* — single most influen-

tial male vocalists in country music in the past two decades. We don't quite understand this as he sounds a lot like Merle Haggard. Be that as it may, J. D. Crowe has seen fit to take this 1981 effort and remix and re-record it with such stalwarts as Alison Krauss and Carl Jackson. The result is pure old-school country. Country music as it used to be: strong but world weary vocals, gently wailing steel guitar, dollops of honky-tonk piano, sharp beats and wistful, angelic backup singing. Derivative yet genuine; Whitley sure had a way with a song. And with a bottle, dead at 33 with a .47 alcohol level. That alone should qualify him for the country music hall of fame.

-Dom Salemi

BQ

A lot of great reviewers contribute to Audio Depravation. You can check them out by visiting:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/aboutbq.htm>

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After all the fun **BRUTARIAN** publisher **Dom Salemi** and I had a few weeks back at the **SMALL PRESS EXPO** in Bethesda, Maryland, it's a miracle that I can operate my keyboard well enough to type, (actually, it's a miracle that the two of us weren't incarcerated).

Besides leaving the SPX with the kind of hangover I haven't experienced since my early twenties, I also left with a satchel full of some of the snazziest "alternative" comic books I've ever cast my itchy, watery eyes upon, (a small handful of which I'll attempt to describe to you presently).

Thanks to the hundreds of thou-

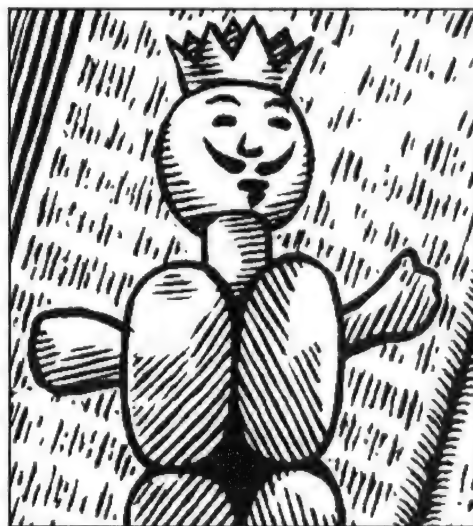
sands of dollars **Dom** has spent on market research, we know that the average **BRUTARIAN** reader has about as much imagination as a lump of paste, so it may be a bit optimistic of me to ask you to attempt the following task

Nevertheless, please try to imagine yourself in a world where an enraged, knife-wielding Cubist painter chases a small creature made entirely of mushrooms.

Having trouble picturing it? Take a hit off of some low-grade reefer laced with rat poison, and try now to imagine yourself in a city whose evening skyline is swarming with sex blimps manned by helpful pirates.

Getting a bit nearer to it? Now drink a liter of Pepsi followed by three regular coffees and twelve unfiltered cigarettes, and imagine that you're strapping a pair of men's briefs over your head as you prepare to join Einstein, Mark Twain, and The Who's Roger Daltrey as they tunnel to the Earth's molten core.

We're SO CLOSE now; all that's left is for you to pull thirteen dollars from your pocket and purchase **SNAKE -N- BACON'S CARTOON CABARET**, a collection of brilliant comic strips by the modern master of cartoon absurdity, Michael Kupperman.



Kupperman's unique strips have appeared in the pages of many publications, ranging from **FORTUNE** to **THE OXFORD AMERICAN**, (as well as the humble rag you hold in your crusty paws right now). Perhaps

you've come across his work before and admired the painstakingly detailed, retro-flavored drawings, all the while feeling your mind melt as it tries to wrap itself around gags that seem to emanate from some shimmering, unearthly vortex of divine madness.

If you've been lucky enough to see one of Kupperman's strips before, then you know what a treasure this collection must be. If you HAVEN'T seen this material, then forget about whatever plans you had for the rest of the day, and do whatever it takes to obtain a copy of **SNAKE -N- BACON'S CARTOON CABARET**.

Reading it will almost certainly reorganize your higher brain functions, as well as cause you to laugh until your lungs bleed, (approximately 200 pages, \$13 from HarperCollins).

Down here in the States, a cartoonist's existence is not unlike that of a sewer rat. One spends one's days scratching away in the damp shadows, waiting for a scrap of bread crust to fall off the plate held by one of the publishing world creatures dining gracefully in the sunlit cafes above. And when that crumb falls, you'd better move fast, before one of your brother rats claws your soft belly open trying to get it away from you.

But look a bit to the North in Montreal, and it's a different story. The local cartoonists congregate merrily in lively taverns, joined by the common bonds of universal health care and easily-obtained welfare dispensed by a government that doesn't shriek like some unhappy vampire at the mention of the words "cultural endowment."

Together, these hearty souls raise their frosty pints of Blanche Du Chamblay in one hand while clutching a Sharpie marker in the other, as they sketch away deftly at some delightful, communally-drawn comic strip. The influences of French Bande Dessinees and American Underground Comix intersect in these Montreal cartoonists, and the result is a freaky hybrid style that is at once irrepressibly strange and masterfully-drawn. A Paradise on Earth I tell you, albeit a bit cold in Winter.

One of the fruits to drop recently



from that orchard of frostbitten Elysian trees is **IMAGE GUN#1**, a hand-somely produced anthology book from consummate hipster **Jamie Salomon's** Crunchy Comics. This first issue of **IMAGE GUN** serves as a perfect introduction to Montreal's vibrant underground comics scene, not only because it offers a sampling of some of the city's tastiest current talent, but also because it is in **ENGLISH!**

IMAGE GUN is replete with artfully-rendered strips by local luminaries **RICK TREMBLES**, **ERIC BRAUN**, **RUPERT BOTTENBERG** and others; also included is an entertaining interview with the scene's notorious founding father **HENRIETTE VALIUM**, who makes the following prediction: "2020, according to me, is going to be the



international year of heat exposition. Day and night we'll fry like little chickens!"

IMAGE GUN #1 (50 pages) is available for \$3.75 US/\$5.50 CAN from Crunchy Comics C.P. Du Parc #48082, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4S8

THE BEST OF BITTERKOMIX (Volume One) is one of those schizoid comic collections one occasionally finds where the cover and of the contents seem to feature the work of a single cartoonist; suddenly at the book's midpoint, the reader is stunned to find upside-down pages! After a few terrifying moments of panic and disorientation, one flips the book over, only to find **ANOTHER** cover and contents by an entirely **DIFFERENT** cartoonist!

Yes, reading comic books is a dangerous business, but it has its rewards as well. **THE BEST OF BITTERKOMIX** introduces English-speaking audiences to the considerable talents of two South African scribblers, namely **Anton "Joe Dog" Kannemeyer** and **Conrad Botes**. It would seem that these two have been publishing Bitterkomix since the mid-90's, but if you don't speak Afrikaans, you've probably never heard of it.

Well, you're hearing about it now. **Mr. Botes** and **Mr. Kannemeyer** have clearly distinct drawing styles as well as different approaches to storytelling, so there's no risk of one artist's work being confused for the other's at the book's mind-bending mid-point. **Mr. Botes** tells stories out of South Africa's violent colonial past, and brings these bloody events to life with a raw, brushy style.

Mr. Kannemeyer on the other hand is primarily interested in his own tortured personal history, which he explores with a free-form style that constantly mutates across the stylistic spectrum. His drawings run the gamut, from art school drawing class realism to spare, new-wavey minimalism, with a smattering of ironic mainstream comix swipes thrown in to keep the reader on his or her toes.

Both sides of this two-sided book make for a fascinating read, but I fear that I cannot tell you how much I paid

for this 80-page softcover, nor how you might obtain a copy. Your best bet would be to scour the Internet and see if any of the more adventurous comix outlets are selling it. If this angle proves fruitless, try writing the two guilt-laden white fellows at: **BITTERKOMIX PULP**, P.O. BOX 564, **STELLENBOSCH**, 7599, **SOUTH AFRICA**.

Meanwhile, back in Slovenia, we have the industrious folks at **Strip-**



burger, who offer us their raunchy special issue, **XXX STRIPBURGER**, (a book so filthy, I can't help but wonder how they managed to get support from the Republic of Slovenia's ministry of Culture).

XXX STRIPBURGER's 46 strips come from a truly international group of contributors; so much so that the table of contents reads like the roll-call from some United Nations of Filthy Cartoonists. Besides a heaping supply of eastern European-types whose names are so full of consonants I don't dare speak them aloud, we have Canadians, (**Julie Doucet**), Israelis, (**Itzak Rennert**), Finns, Dutchmen, Italians, Belgians, and even a bunch of decadent capitalist pig-dog Americans, (**Dean Haspiel**,



Nick Bertozzi, Leela Corman, Bridget Evans, and others).

Each and every one of them furiously working their inky fingers to bring you an incredibly smutty book that leaves the reader feeling like they've just taken a ride through Disneyland's "It's A Small World After All" while crammed into a boat in between Ron Jeremy, Annie Sprinkle, and Al Goldstein.

This softcover trade paperback, featuring 159 filth-encrusted black & white pages, is distributed in the U.S. by WESTHAMPTON HOUSE, P.O. BOX 512, EASTHAMPTON, MA, 01027, and is available for the low, low bargain porno price of \$13.95.

From Pasadena, California comes an oversized, arty comic book called **ODEN**. This beautifully produced anthology book features eleven utterly dissimilar strips that have only one thing in common; this being the high quality of the artwork.

My favorites are **BIG TOP CITY** by **Cathy Malaksian**, (a grimy, surreal tale of a circus clown named Yup Yup, and his romantic misadventures), and **THE HAPPY PIG SLAUGHTERING HOME** by **Joe Orantia** and editor **Robert Goodin**, (a zany tour through a meat-packing plant, as seen by some radical vegetarian Hanna-Barbera animator on LSD). Also notable are **Anthony Vukojevich's** gloriously painted strip **OPTIC NERVES**, and **Everett Peck's** goofy **PORKY'S AUTO BODY**.

Of course, it wouldn't be an over-

sized, arty comic without some inscrutably baffling arty strips, and you'll find plenty of those in **ODEN**.

ODEN sports gorgeous full-color printing on each of its 72 pages, and is available for \$18 from **ROBOT PUBLISHING**, 542 S. ROBLES AVENUE, PASADENA, CA, 91101, (and if you plan to order by mail, you might consider dropping them a preliminary note to ask what the additional postage rate will be).

By this point, you're starting to mumble to yourself, "this column's full of nothing but a bunch of comic book reviews! This Hellman's gotta be some kind of NERD!"

In order to dislodge that embarrassing notion from the dark, inner recesses of your pointed head, I'll skip those last few comics reviews I'd planned to share with you, and instead turn my gaze in the direction of



a more rugged, wholesomely masculine field of interest. In other words, towards **PORNOGRAPHY!**

Now as we all know, there's that variety of nasty porno that serves only to degrade and defile; the sort that only the most depraved piece of human waste would soil himself by handling.

And then there is that sublime smut that seeks to elevate the very senses, breaking free from the earthly shackles of mere terrestrial "porno", rising ever skyward to those lofty realms reserved for "arty porno."

Representing that disgusting first category is **PORN ART**, a small hard-

cover portfolio of photographs sent to me by a reprehensible individual we'll refer to only as Dominick J. Salemi of Alexandria, Virginia.

PORN ART is collaboration between photographer **Dahmane** and model **Chloe Des Lysees**, both of whom are of course French.

It is undeniable that **Mlle. Des Lysees** is very lovely, and equally undeniable that the photographs are exquisitely shot in interesting locations. But one cannot escape the brutal reality that the poor misguided woman has a bottle (or some similarly inappropriate object) up her ass in nearly every photo. And if that isn't humiliation enough, roughly a third of the photos show her being pawed by leering Gallic geezers!

God only knows where you'd find this nasty little book except for **Dom's** bookshelf, (if I ever return it to him), and God only knows how much you'd pay for it if you ever found it. It's published by **ALIXEE**, so go have a search on the Internet if you must, you pervos.

In the category of GOOD porno, the blessed **Benedikt Taschen** and his elves bring us **CHEESECAKE: THE ROTENBERG COLLECTION**, another exhaustively fat compendium of porn from the past.

Seems that some dedicated self-abuser named **Mark Rotenberg** has managed to stockpile a vast horde of vintage girly pics from the Golden Age of Porn, (being, as similarly minded wise men and I see it, the '40s through VERY early '60s). If you've flailed yourself blind looking at all the now familiar Bettie Page material and find yourself hungering for more, then this guy Rotenberg is here to help.

CHEESECAKE: THE ROTENBERG COLLECTION provides a whopping 768 pages of vintage cuties, (a few of whom may now be aged relatives of **BRUTARIAN** readers) frolicking in charmingly tacky Moderne interiors. You'll find color, you'll find black & white; you'll find yourself massaging your privates. Buy it immediately for \$19.95 at any decent bookstore, or at Amazon.com. Almighty Onan commands it!

BQ



So it's our first ever Christmas/New Year's issue and with it your editor has asked Mr. Fide to provide you, dear reader with some alternative viewing choices for this, the most jolly of seasons (Yeah, right. If you're a retailer maybe). Seems a little late for that sort of foolishness, this being already past the New Year, but what the heck. Ozzy's first thought was to break his list down into categories — children, seniors, etc. — but then chucked that idea as being unworkable. Besides, we're all Brutarians, aren't we? And we've seen *It's A Wonderful Life* so many times we're actually saddened at this point when Pottersville turns back to Bedford Falls. So let me merely throw out a few titles Oz likes to throw on to relieve the myriad pressures brought on by the Holiday sleaze-on.

1. Santa Claus Conquers The Martians: Ozzy can remember He and his childhood friends hooting this off the screen when viewing it in its initial theatrical run way back in 1964. Time has not improved it any but for adults, especially those who've had a few too many spiked eggnogs, it will no doubt be a laugh riot. Santa and two Earth children get kidnapped by green Martians and end up teaching one and all — that's you, you drunken fool — the true meaning of Xmas.

2. Die Hard: Yeah, you forgot it takes place at Christmas-time. Don't you remember it all starts with a Christmas party? Of course, not, we drink heavily during movies we love so that we can forget everything and have a ready-made excuse for seeing them again and again and again. A lovely piece of gratuitous filmmaking. Just the thing to slap on the video player after watching *Frosty The Snowman* with the kids.

3. Black Christmas: Not just a great Christmas flick but a great horror flick as well. A psychotic killer holes up inside a sorority house right before the holiday break. Definitely DO NOT watch this alone or with the lights out. It's that scary. From the folks who brought you *Porky's*, so you know this is high quality entertainment.

4. Scrooged: Maybe you were put off by this because you know the story by heart and no amount of drinking can obliterate it from your memory. The hell with that noise: a script by demented Saturday Night Live writer Michael O'Donoghue (RIP), a nutty-wacky-kind-of-cuckoo performance

by Bill Murray and a supporting cast that includes Carol Kane, Bobcat Gold-however-you-spell-it, David Johanssen and Robert Mitchum. Plus an ending that will have you sobbing in your beer mug and really wishing for "peace-on-earth and goodwill-to-men." Or something close to that.

5. Beavis and Butthead's Christmas and A South Park Christmas: Nasty, irreverent swipes at the season. The first is nasty and sophomoric, the latter, nasty and evil. How else can you describe an ostensible children's cartoon that has a jovial turd representing the spirit of Christmas and Hitler singing a rather moving version of "O Tannenbaum"?

6. Silent Night, Deadly Night Parts 1-5: You didn't think Ozzy would fail to mention a franchise featuring a psychotic Santa Claus, did you? Ya just gotta love a series which has jolly ole St. Nick attacking a deformed nun. Maybe not, but the third installment finds cult director Monte (TWO LANE BLACKTOP) Hellman at the, ahem, helm, and volumes four and five have horror cult legend-in-the making, Brian Yuzna's fingerprints all over things. No less an authority than John Stanley, the author of the Creature Feature sci-fi, fantasy and horror guides, calls number two "one of the most mean-spirited slasher films ever made." That's a recommendation if Oz ever heard one.



7. Don't Open Till Christmas: Britain shows the makers of the above how to do it. Here we have a psycho knocking-off British in very graphic fashion. Unlike the *Silent Night* series, this is quite suspenseful and rather literate considering the genre. As an addled bonus we get Caroline Munro walking around in a skin-tight dress.

8. Pocketful of Miracles: If you have to — absolutely *have to* — watch something seasonal that's not going to offend anybody in any way, then allow Mr. Fide to suggest this hilarious and, yes, heart-warming Frank Capra flick. Glen Ford is a spiffy New York mobster trying to turn gin-guzzling bag lady, Bette Davis into a high society dame in an effort to please leggy Hope Lange (hubba hubba! believe it or not) and keep a winning streak going. If it sounds Runyonesque that's because it's based on a story by Damon. With Peter Falk as a sour, wisecracking henchman effortlessly stealing every scene he's in.

9. 1941: Steven Spielberg's attempt to make an epic comedy may have failed with moviegoers but it's a super secret hidden pleasure of Ozzy's. Plotting and story are far too complicated here but it's setting is Los Angeles right before Christmas and concerns the idiocy that ensues when amateur pilot John Belushi convinces a military commander at a suburban outpost (Warren Oates) that the Japanese are about to invade. Much hilarity ensues thanks to the outrageous overacting of Dan Aykroyd, the aforementioned Belushi, Slim Pickens, Eddie Deezen and the subtle underacting of a cast of supporting luminaries including Toshiro Mifune and Christopher Lee. Don't miss the scene with the Ferris wheel — one of the funniest moments in recent movie history.

10. The Man Who Came To Dinner: What's Christmas without a Hollywood screwball classic? Monty Wooley stars as — and was nominated for best actor for — an irascible New York scribe forced to spend Christmas with a prim and proper mid-Western couple after injuring his hip taking a fall on the icy steps fronting their lavish town house. Growing tired of padding around in a wheel chair and insulting his reluctant hosts, he embarks on a scheme to frustrate the growing romance between his amanuensis (Bette Davis) and a local playwright. Which Monty does. But when he discovers Bette to be truly in love, he seeks to redress the situation by calling in a number of his Hollywood friends to help. This includes Jimmy Durante giving a performance so marvelously outrageous he turns hamminess into an art form. From a script by Charles S. Kaufmann, the writer of all those wonderful Marx Brothers' movies.

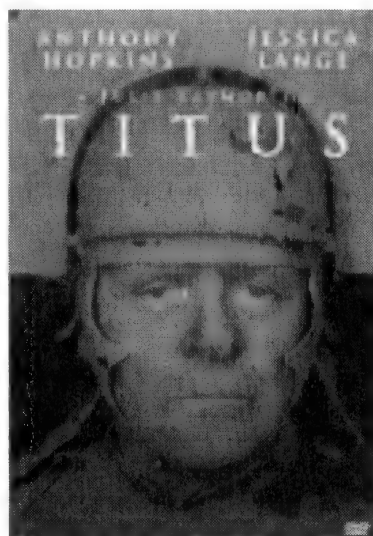
11. The Ref: Omigosh, the assistant editor just reminded Ozzy that this is supposed to be a listing for the twelve days of Christmas, those being the days following Christmas — I think. Good thing, too, as Mr. Fide had originally only listed a Top Ten but, thanks to the miracle of modern page layouts, you'll never know the difference except that I'm telling you. Mr. Fide neglected to mention this laugh riot starring Denis Leary as a small-potatoes thief taking bickering married couple Kevin Spacey and Judy Davis hostage while on

the run from the police. Leary plans to leave Davis and Spacey tied up until things cool down but it's Christmas Eve and unbeknownst to him the in-laws (which include Glynis Johns as the mother-in-law from hell and Christine Baranski) are on their way over for dinner. Acid-tongued comedy at it's best with marvelous comic turns by all the principles.

12. The Nightmare Before Christmas: The best stop-action animated film in the last ten years. Also one of the best adult feature-disguised-as-a-kid flick as well. The musical numbers ain't too shabby either thanks to Oingo Boingo man Danny Elfman, who has been used to his great potential in other Burton vehicles such as *Batman*, *Mars Attacks!*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Beetlejuice*, and *Edward Scissorhands*. From a story by Tim Burton we have the hilarious fable of Jack Skellington, the Pumpkin King of Halloweentown kidnapping Santa in order to do Christmas in more chilling fashion. Marvelous voices supplied by Chris Sarandon, Catherine O'Hara, William Hickey and Paul "Pee Wee Herman" Reubens in a work that took over 120 animators and two years to produce. Nominated for four Academy Awards for special effects and, in an act that can only be considered highway robbery, *Nightmare* received not a single award.

TITUS

(1999)



Finally, a Shakespearean play for gorehounds! That's right, hands chopped off, tongues ripped out, human sacrifice and blood everywhere. Plus Jessica Lange naked. Quite often. Too bad this is one of the Bard's worst plays, a farrago of black comedy, melodrama and high blown sentiments. In fact, it's highly doubtful that Willie even wrote much of this nonsensical story concerning a Roman general (Anthony Hopkins making much ado about nothing)

giving allegiance to a corrupt emperor at the expense of his family. While director Julie Taymor professes great love for this play she's chopped more than an hour and a half from it and sets much of it in time periods other than AD Roman Empire. This allows her to engage in all manner of things fantastical vis-à-vis costuming and set design and the result is a mighty impressive visual spectacle — Fellinesque orgies, Ken Russell inspired anachronisms, Kurosawian pomp and circumstance. Throw in the *de rigueur* surrealistic montages which Taymor calls "my Penny Arcade Nightmares,"

and, viola, you've got the first Shakespearean cinematic adaptation you can watch with the sound off.

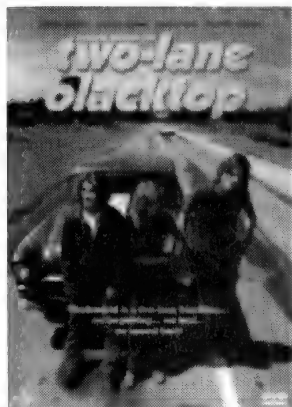


TOO SCARED TO SCREAM (1985)

Also known as *The Doorman*, also known as a wretched piece of garbage to be avoided at all costs. Unless you're the type that enjoys inconsequential dialogue, cardboard characters, long gratuitous nude scenes with leggy brunettes and embarrassingly juvenile screenplays. Ozzy sure does and so He suggests you rent this sleazy 80s slasher flick which has Mike "Touch" Connors and Anne Archer on the trail of a serial killer plying his trade in a ritzy uptown Manhattan apartment complex. All clues point to the night doorman, a rather fey type given to quoting Shakespeare for no rhyme or reason. This annoys Touch so he does a little investigating and discovers that the doorman is a rich, retired actor who lives with his catatonic, wheelchair-bound mother (Maureen O'Sullivan who is only allowed to grimace and move three of the fingers on her left hand). Arrest the guy! He's obviously a nutjob, right? Well, Connors is a little slow on the uptake so first he has to put the lithesome Archer in extreme danger by putting her in the apartment of one of the murdered babes and having her come on to the doorman every hour on the hour. Naturally our prime suspect gets a wee bit suspicious when it begins to appear that Archer has nothing better to do with her time than get into his pants. It all ends badly with everyone on the case getting whacked or stabbed save for Archer and a surprise ending so ludicrous it will likely leave you slack-jawed in astonishment.



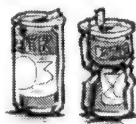
TWO-LANE BLACKTOP (1971)



Most readers of this magazine are far too young to remember the accompanying hype surrounding the release of this 1971 Monte Hellman film. The folks at Esquire, *por ejemplo*, were so impressed they printed the script in its entirety. The movie went on to bomb, naturally, but in the years following it somehow achieved cult status. Now, on the eve, of it's thirtieth anniversary, the motion picture is being feted with a wide-screen release from an art house video company. Ozzy cannot, for the life of Him, see why: the flick was a bore then and it's a bore now. James Taylor and Dennis Wilson star as a pair of car crazy dragsters driving their souped-up, primer gray '55 Chevy through the southwest looking for races with local gearheads. The races are never shown. Dennis and James never talk. They meet Warren Oates, a burnt-out drifter with a spanking new mustard yellow GTO. After passing each other on the endless highway a few times they agree to race for pink tickets; the first one to Washington, D.C. gets the other's car. Nobody gets past Memphis. Oz is sure this is supposed to mean something.

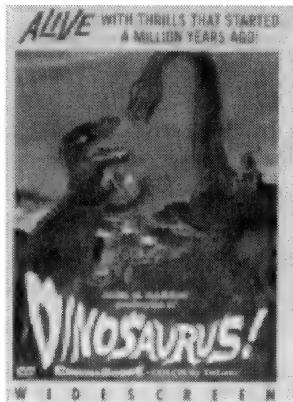
not, for the life of Him, see why: the flick was a bore then and it's a bore now. James Taylor and Dennis Wilson star as a pair of car crazy dragsters driving their souped-up, primer gray '55 Chevy through the southwest looking for races with local gearheads. The races are never shown. Dennis and James never talk. They meet Warren Oates, a burnt-out drifter with a spanking new mustard yellow GTO. After passing each other on the endless highway a few times they agree to race for pink tickets; the first one to Washington, D.C. gets the other's car. Nobody gets past Memphis. Oz is sure this is supposed to mean something.

As is the fact that there's a cute girl (the late Laurie Bird) riding with Taylor and Wilson who starts out as a nympho and ends up an automaton. Look Mr. Hellman, we know, as Hunter S. Thompson, once observed, that America is a nation of 250 million used-car drivers, the function of the artist is to take a few of those lost souls and somehow, some way, make them interesting. But then "interesting" has never been something (cf. *RIDE THE WHIRLWIND*, *COCKFIGHTER*) which you have found "interesting," is it Monte?



DINOSAURUS!

(1960)



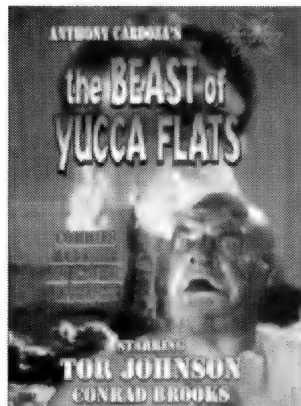
Boy, this is just... junk. You wouldn't be speaking in hyperbolae in describing fiasco as one of the worst movies ever made. Every line guaranteed to make you wince in embarrassment. Acting turns giving new meaning to the word stiff. Special effects so cheaply done Toho Studios would blanch. A harbor dredging company pulls in a frozen brontosaurus, a tyrannosaurus and a caveman. When the trio melt, they come to life and terrorize a remote Caribbean Island. Well,

not the caveman who jumps into bushes when frightened. Or the brontosaurus who lets little Pedro ride on his back. Not the tyrannosaurus, either, as he would rather lock jaws with a bulldozer or a car than a human. So we've got a monster movie without monsters, right? Not so fast, take a look at the humans. There's the representative Irishman: an alcoholic gibbering in infantile brogue. The fat man meant to represent the working class: so dimwitted as to be unable to wipe his own ass without help. Women? There are two here, one educated, the other uneducated; which means nothing as both, at heart, are little more than pathetic, simplistic animals unconsciously driven to seeking safe harbor in the arms of man. Still, one must be careful in the choice of a man. Those with Spanish accents, for example, must be avoided at all costs as animals such as these men are either retarded or criminal. Square-jawed American men are best as they love children, treat women with uncommon courtesy and never break a sweat in a pinch. Oz doesn't know about you but these caricatures look pretty monstrous in the cold light of the 21st Century.



THE BEAST OF YUCCA FLATS (1961)

In our never ending attempts to bring you the best of the worst we give you... *The Beast of Yucca Flats*. Staring Tor Johnson — the second most popular Halloween mask after Nixon — and a no-name cast in an independent feature with no dialogue. That's right, no dialogue; the filmmakers lost



the soundtrack and had to overdub everything with voice-over narration. Which they obviously made up on the spot: "People go on vacation. They sometimes go east. Sometimes go west. Sometimes north and south." They also fill us in on things after they happen. So what happens? Tor, a scientist on the run from a couple of nefarious Russian agents, stumbles onto a nuclear testing ground and gets toasted. Yes, "touch a button and a scientist becomes a BEAST!" A

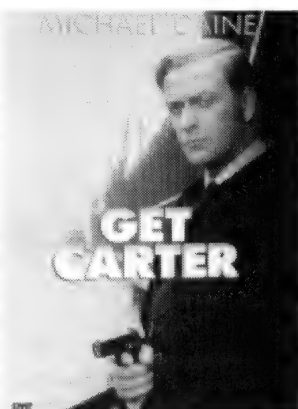
beast with nothing better to do than wander aimlessly about the brush of New Mexico strangling homely women and throwing boulders at children. A crackerjack team of intellectually challenged policemen parachute a sharpshooter onto flatland easily and more quickly accessible by car; a development which so confuses the deranged Tor that he slaps the sleeper hold on the guy without the gun thereby allowing himself to be shot into several large pieces. Unbelievable doesn't begin to describe this.



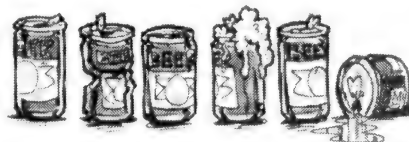
GET CARTER (1971)

As Sly Stallone recently appeared in a dreadful remake of this 1971 British crime flick, and as Oscar talk continues to swirl around director Michael Hodges and his feature, *The Croupier*, Oz thought it appropriate to introduce you to... *Get Carter*, which just so happens to have been Mr. Hodges' feature film debut. And what a debut, a simply smashing kiss-off to the film noir genre starring a young and natty Michael Caine as a mob man so hard he smashes everything he

comes up against. Accidentally and intentionally. In this, Hodges beautifully plays off the conventions of the genre. While your typical hard-boiled maverick like Bogart or Mitchum can turn as mean as any mean street they walk down, there are lines they do not cross. Women may be dames but they are treated with courtesy unless they show they are undeserving of it. And the little man, the guy just doing his job, is never bullied never hit, unless he gets out of line and starts taking the high hat. Caine, on the other hand, believes that anything goes when you're attempting to right a wrong. So here, while starting on the path of righteousness in the search for his brother's killers — the film opens with him reading Farewell My Lovely on a train to Newcastle — Caine quickly loses his way. The guilty get what's coming to them, sure, but the innocent get it too. Sometimes this happened with Phillip Marlowe; still, you knew, in your gut, he cared. Even if he didn't always show it.



Caine's response when a friend gets viciously beaten after doing him a favor. "Here's a few bills. Take some karate lessons." It's hard to care about a guy like this; nevertheless, Caine's such a suave bad ass it's impossible to take your eyes off him. Hodges, working from a fine script, invests his film with a knowing air of fatalism superbly reinforced by repeated

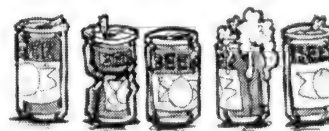


shots of the Newcastle slum buildings being supplanted by the chilly, streamlined multi-storied buildings.

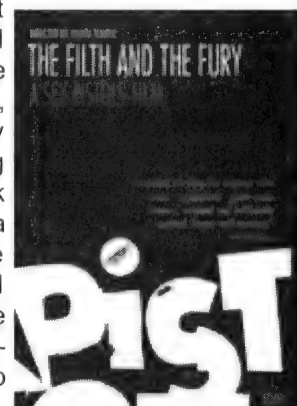
THE FILTH AND THE FURY (2000)

Naturally, you have little interest at this late date in the Sex Pistols and the English punk movement of the late 70s. Still, this documentary, graced with narration by Johnny Rotten (there were others talking but you'll tune out) fascinates. Ask why. The band was together for a short time. They only put out one record. The movement they helped found was quickly co-opted by the major recording companies and homogenized out of existence. So don't watch. So try and not watch.

England was falling apart and yet dreaming of empire. The Colonies were looking toward England and wondering whether rock and roll was viable in any sense worth talking about. Sense? What sense? Nonsense! Jackboots and marching, charging in the streets. Parents wringing their hands, ministers taking to the pulpits, newscasters weeping and screaming for Frank Sinatra. For one brief shining moment anarchy was ascendant and all seemed right with the world. *The Filth and the Fury* adroitly captures that lovely moment in time when wild wild wild youth asked and got... nothing but truth truth truth. All right, Oz is getting a little carried away here; these were heady times for him. But in

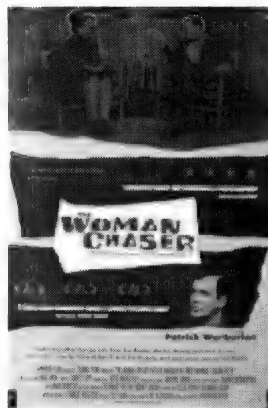


the final analysis you did get a lot of great rock and roll, a commodity in short supply during the age of prog rock and MOR crap churned out by the likes of The Eagles and Elton John.



THE WOMAN CHASER (1999)

Oscar Wilde maintained that criticism is merely a reflection of the writer's mood at any given moment. Well, Ozzy sat through this earnest attempt at something or other twice and was put in a "bad" mood both times. Oh, Oz wanted to like it. Charles Willeford is one of his favorite hard-boiled writers and *The Woman Chaser*, a study of the fine line between madness and genius, inspiration and hokey, remains a novel Mr. Fide finds himself returning to again and yet again.



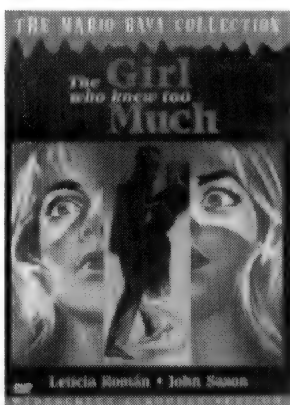
Surprising then that there's nothing to like in this story of a vaguely psychotic used-car salesman's throwing over his career to make a film he believes will somehow validate his existence. Okay? You can see the possibilities for dark comedy and surreal irony this suggests. So what do the filmmakers do? Film it in black and white and keep it clean and hard. Like a De-muth painting. Wrong wrong wrong. Ozzy doesn't want "precision" in noir. He wants odd angles, fog, low-key

lighting. And a narrative that lets you in early on where it's going but still talks nice about the possibility of redemption along the way. No such luck here. We're doing art at the end of a lonely street. Paint by numbers despair and insanity with a few clever touches. Courtesy of UCLA film school. The abyss painted with a light, knowing touch. Oz lays you even money these guys drink Pym's and call it bourbon.



THE GIRL WHO KNEW TOO MUCH (1963)

Poor Nora Davis. Having a terrible bad night, she is. First the elderly friend Ethel, with whom she is staying while traipsing about Rome suffers a heart attack. Then while running to the hospital to inform the proper authorities Nora is mugged and knocked out. She awakens only to witness a murder. Time to go home, Nora. Especially when both the police and your old friend's doctor, John Saxon, think you dreamed it all thanks to the knock on the head. Nora is hardheaded - literally and figuratively — and when a lovely married friend of Ethel invites her to stay at her apartment while she and her husband are out of town, Nora accepts so that she can solve the murder mystery. All sorts of wonderful complications ensue with director Mario Bava (*Bay of Blood*, *Black Sunday*) playing most of it for laughs while adding several creepy touches along the way. The twist ending may not be

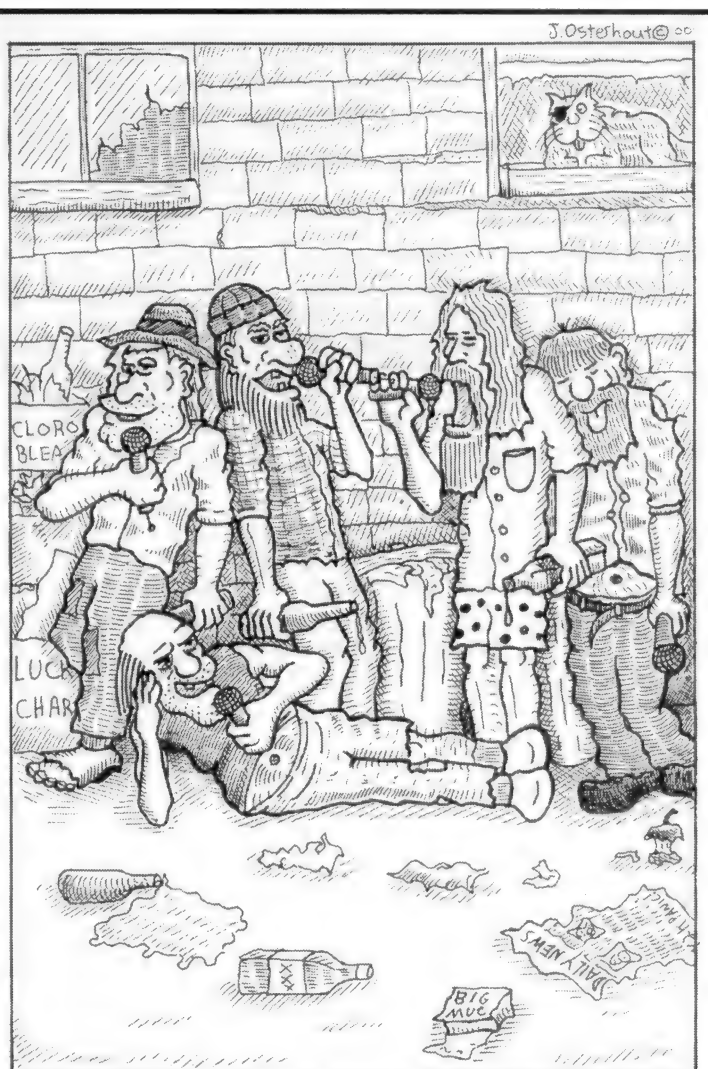


twisty enough for most giallo enthusiasts but its strung out rather nicely leaving you to wonder what might have been had Bava been allowed to play it straight.

BQ

Ozzy Fide has no life. He sits home 90% of the time either sleeping or watching movies, and during his waking hours, drinking a lot of beer regardless of his other activities. The only time he leaves the house is to buy more beer, rent movies, or to take out some poor, unsuspecting blind date he met in a chat room on the Internet. If you want to be bombarded with more about Oz, check him out at:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/others/fideozzy.htm>



THE BACK-STREET BUMS



BENJY ACTUALLY GAVE A RAT'S ASS



SURGE ENGINE

by David Fitzpatrick

So there were a few of you who didn't care much for the nifty picture of the guy with his face completely ripped off as a result of not wearing a helmet and performing a Superman off a moving motorcycle. But, judging from the email, most of you *did* like it — and visited Rotten Dot Com per my recommendation.

My Esteemed Editor, Dom Salemi, whined a little that I focused too much on pornography in the premiere of this column in Issue #31. He was referring, of course, to a couple of Web sites I urged you to visit — one being Ultrapasswords.com, which provides access to many pay sites for you to, um, try out; the other was JackinWorld.com, a fantastic masturbation site. Now, far be it for me to assume Mr. Salemi doesn't spend any time on adult sites, and who am I to assume his interest in masturbation hasn't earned him the nickname "Dom Salami" for nothing; but I hastened to point out to His Editoriness that those sites hardly focused on pornography. Yes, [Ultrapasswords](http://Ultrapasswords.com) directed you to a site which linked to said pornographic sites — but [JackinWorld](http://JackinWorld.com), friends and neighbors, is nothing short of a masterpiece of masturbation, truly a site dedicated to the *art brut* concept of this humble magazine.

That was my succinct way of telling my boss to go blow. So it's entirely possible I might not have a third appearance of this column, or any appearances of *anything* in *Brutarian* ever again; which would be bad because the guy pays pretty good.

First things first: **Brutarian.com** continues to rock the online world. Our motto, "A Site That Doesn't Suck!" is aptly named. We've put a lot of hours of blood, sweat, and tears — well, plenty of sweat and a whole lot of tears, anyway — into building the thing up. A lot of folks have emailed me asking when a lot more past content was going to be made available, given that I've trumpeted at that occurrence being by the end of the year. Well, I lied, but I'm working on it. There are some copyright issues to overcome; we can't just reprint EVERYTHING, some of it requires contributors' permission and a lot of those underground guys are living in sewers in big cities, so they're hard to track down (but don't send them payment and watch how fast they find YOU). Expect to see, very soon, a lot of complete works of the following: the amazingly egocentric writings of the One, the Only, the Ugly, Stately Wayne Manor in the form of every "On Manor's Mind" that has appeared in these hallowed pages; the countless rants of Ozzy Fide and all the past "Six Pack Theater" installments; certainly anything I've been doing; and, of course, anything ever penned by Dom Salemi. Likely to soon follow: the works of artists Danny Hellman and Mark Poutenis and the writings of staff regulars such as John Oliver and James Maclaren.

Meanwhile, the Web site is becoming a total hit-fest, and we thank you all for it. Our semi-regular *Necessary Roughness* column continues to be insanely popular, and more and more contributors are contributing their bio information and often-frightening pictures — keep them coming! As always, if you know anyone listed as a contributor who has no bio, drop him a line and tell them to contact me. I'm indy@brutarian.com — and looking forward to hearing from all of you. Hopefully not on the same day.

One other fine point: a few people have asked why I'm reviewing only sites I think are great, instead of some particularly bad sites. Offhand, this seems like a silly question, but after all *Brutarian* and others review good and bad in the likes of books, music, and movies — so why not Web sites? Simply put, in order to find out if a book, CD, or movie is any good, you generally have to buy it or rent it or what have you, which bites if the subject matter doesn't tickle your fancy. Web sites, of course, are free, and if you accidentally visit a crappy Web site, you're not going to be out anything short of a small piece of your time. Thus shall Surge Engine direct you to only the best of the eight hundred gazillion sites that are out there.

Onward and upward — check out these great references and let me know what you think.

BRITANNICA.COM

[HTTP://WWW.BRITANNICA.COM](http://www.britannica.com)

Word on the e-street has it that Britannica, faced with overpowering competition not only from other encyclopedia companies but from CD-ROM-based versions thereof, made a daring business decision to launch this site. I can remember a Britannica salesman visiting my house in early 1991, haggard and discouraged, all but *begging* me to buy a set of their beautiful but overpriced volumes. I argued with him that this great new thing called a CD-ROM — a CD player for computers — was going to revolutionize computers and make printed encyclopedias obsolete. "It'll never happen," he stolidly asserted. "Never in a thousand years."

It was two years later that I had my first copy of Grolier on CD-ROM. Every encyclopedia manufacturer jumped on that bandwagon and Britannica, believing that their printed volumes reigned supreme over such cheesy pseudo-encyclopedias as those on CDs, was late into that game.

Their set has clearly always been the best out there. A complete set has the standard "micropedia" which is equivalent to any regular encyclopedia; the "macropedia" is "knowledge in depth" about a variety of more complex subjects, filling as many pages as the more basic set. But we're not here to talk about the printed stuff, and not even to talk about the compact disc stuff. We're here to talk about perhaps one of the most useful Web sites out there.

Britannica.com is probably the most comprehensive information center on the Internet. Touting themselves as "The Web's Best Search," they just might be. I hesitate to use the term "search engine" because the search engine part is just one of many things it does. Obviously, it's an encyclopedia — type in something and up come any and all articles pertaining to your search. In case you don't get all you're looking for, Britannica.com searches other avenues for helpful answers, searching the Web for great sites and articles in magazines, and even Barnes & Noble for books related to your search. It will even pop up links to other search engines to better enhance your search, such as the ever-popular AskJeeves (<http://www.ask.com>) and AltaVista (<http://www.altavista.com>), as well as look for MP3s and a whole host of other add-ons and niftiness you may or may not care about.

I, for one, really focus on one thing: the encyclopedia. As an avid user of reference works of all kind (I routinely have the latest versions of Encarta, Collier's, Grolier, and Compton's handy, just to name a few), I like the added capability to research topics online here. Coupled with the helpful Web links which pop up, all my needs are met in one location — very handy. Additionally, there is even an online Merriam-Webster dictionary. And if the standard search is too broad for you, Britannica offers an Advanced Search for really narrowing your criteria down (known to us computer nerds as "doing the Boolean Shuffle").

And there's much more. Categories of interest make this a true infoportal, as well as links to top news stories. And there are other interesting features. If you're familiar with the amazingly boring Dennis Miller's inane commentary on Monday Night Football, and often don't even get what the heck he's referring to with his higher-than-us intellect, wonder no more. The Annotated Dennis Miller appears here every week to explain it all to those of us not blessed with such a miraculous combination of useless trivia and a penchant for useless sports like football.

Occasionally, there are annoying sponsor pop-up windows which make themselves irritatingly known; a small price to pay for such a wealth of information available so quickly and easily. Britannica managed to deal themselves back into the information trade after nearly betting themselves out. I'd look for this company to become the premiere information source in the world if they keep making solid business calls like this one. But we'll see.

THE LUNATIC LOUNGE

[HTTP://WWW.LUNATICLOUNGE.COM](http://www.lunaticlounge.com)

Short and sweet: just check it out. In the words of Johnny Carson, "some weird, wild stuff."

But my only reason for returning there time and time again is to refer people to the infamous "Trek Love." You can click on the link on the Lunatic Lounge home page, or jump directly to its page at <http://www.lunaticlounge.com/treklove/>. Available if you use RealPlayer (although pirate WAV and MP3 versions are out there on the net if you search, such as on IRC), this is nearly four minutes of, hands down, the funniest *Star Trek* humor around. The entire bit is a collage of spoken lines and sound effects spliced together from various episodes of the original 1960s television series. The results are fluid and hilarious, depicting a homosexual encounter between Captain Kirk and Mister Spock. Even Scotty gets in on the action.

Now, before the Trekkies start sending me hate mail and the gay community starts sending me self-important gay rights diatribes and Paramount Pictures starts sending me nasty legal notices and the rest of you who have attitudes start sending me lectures on copyright law and how this violates the original copyrights, consider my answers in advance: Trekkies, like Bill Shatner said on SNL a few years back, GET A LIFE; gays, if we can laugh at Bill Clinton getting a blow job from Monica Lewinsky, we can certainly laugh at your lifestyle; Paramount, stick it up your ass; and the rest of you, it's free speech and parody, both protected. And, to top it all off, I didn't do this thing — but I wish I had.

So, as long as you have a good sense of humor and don't mind *Trek* and gays being poked fun at, you are absolutely going to DIE over this. One of the funniest pop culture creations the world has ever seen.

THE PLUMB DESIGN VISUAL THESAURUS

[HTTP://WWW.PLUMBDDESIGN.COM/
THESAURUS/](http://www.plumbdesign.com/thesaurus/)

If you're a writer of any sort — and even if you're not — this fantastic online resource will knock you flat. There are countless dictionaries, thesauri, and other word references out there, but the folks at Plumb Design have frankly made understanding language a hundred times more interesting with this gem.

Ever been using a thesaurus and found yourself finding synonyms, then looking up those to find more synonyms, and so on? The premise behind the Plumb Design Visual Thesaurus is just that, only making it easier and giving you a visual, graphical representation of how various words and their synonyms interrelate to one another. You can opt to view in 2D mode if you choose, but half the fun is the 3D mode. The root word you type in is displayed and synonyms are connected by lines in all directions. Click on a synonym and it takes center stage, your original word still spoked off of it and new related words popping into view. Clicking off any word and holding your mouse button while moving the mouse allows you to spin the three-dimensional structure while still connected to your initial word. All the while, previous words to which your main word is connected fade into the background, still visible and accessible. There are other handy features, such as the Auto-Navigate feature, which takes a robotic trip through the interrelated words for your viewing pleasure. A truly fascinating ride into the

world of the English language.

The Visual Thesaurus was created using ThinkMap, a product developed by Plumb Design. It's a Java applet, so if your computer isn't Java enabled, make it so.

The whole process is just plain fantastic and an easy way to kill a half hour just goofing off (yes, all the dirty words you can think of are there; I found them all). Check this one out and don't forget the Dramamine, as motion sickness can result in 3D mode when there are words flying around everywhere.

THE ONION

[HTTP://WWW.THEONION.COM](http://www.theonion.com)

I shouldn't even be reviewing such an insanely popular site on the grounds that I need to find unsung heroes across the Internet, but the fact it, this one is *art brut* if nothing else is.

These folks present an official-looking site that appears to report all the news that's most important to report, but in reality, the stories are all loads of bull — but damn funny loads! False stories abound and are nothing short of hilarious, for the most part.

Well, not being too hasty, not all of it is a load of humorous bull. There are a lot of humorous commentaries that are true to life and just as funny. There are reviews, features, columns, and comics. The one common denominator they all seem to share is a touch of humor in some ways.

I understand The Onion began and still is available in print form, but this Web site is a peach. Check it out, check back often, and make this masterpiece a part of your weekly itinerary while surfing the best Web waves.

LEGO STAR WARS TRILOGY

[HTTP://WWW5B.BIGLOBE.NE.JP/~MBSF/](http://www5b.biglobe.ne.jp/~MBSF/)

Star Wars fans, if you haven't visited this creative niche in cyberspace, do so now — run, don't walk, as Dom and Ozzy often say.

This site is an amateur bit done by a guy from Japan, and you might notice some garbage characters in the English version as you peruse it, but the artistic value here is well worth it. What this guy has done is shoot still pictures to create photo stories about all three movies in the original *Star Wars* trilogy — using Legos. That's right — *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, and *Return of the Jedi*, still photos of the various scenes, done with little plastic blocks. Spaceships, props, you name it, all Lego-done. There are some scenes where actual images from the movies were used as backdrops, and a few where backgrounds using blankets, sheets, and even real snow were utilized, but it's safe to say that nearly the whole series was done in pictures.

There are ten pages per movie, each page having six pictures, for a grand total of 180 still shots depicting the scenes in the movies. It took the man something like 152 weeks to pull this all off, and he does it wonderfully. Many pictures are accompanied by lines of dialogue, abbreviated dialogue, and sometimes improvised tongue-in-cheek humorous originals — like referring to firepower as "bricks."

The work that went into this is extraordinary. My only wish was that he didn't shoot every scene — but who knows what may come later. Overall, this is a riot! A must-visit for anyone who is a *Star Wars* fan and who appreciated *Hardware Wars*. If you didn't like that one and thought it was an insult to George Lucas and the *Star Wars* universe, you likely won't like this (and, by the way, really need to get a life).

KISSTHISGUY.COM

[HTTP://WWW.KISSTHISGUY.COM](http://www.kissthisguy.com)

Ever been singing the lyrics to a song you really like, and singing them frequently, and one day have someone say, "What are you saying in that line?" and you repeat it, and the someone laughs his ass off at you and tells you you've been singing it all wrong? Well, it's happened to a lot of people, and this Web site is dedicated to all of us who have.

Jimi Hendrix once sang, "Excuse me while I kiss the sky" but when you listen to him, it *does* sound quite like he says "Excuse me while I kiss this guy." Thus comes the name of the site in question. You can search for misunderstood lyrics by artist or by song and even check out recent lyrics. Of course, you can submit your own embarrassing tales.

Part of a submission allows for you to tell about the embarrassing moment of revelation, the age you first realized it, whether or not you think your version is better, and whether or not you've ever convinced someone else of your version. And whether or not you take interesting medication. This site is just an absolute hoot. A few of my favorite examples:

- AC/DC's "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap": The line of the song's title misunderstood as "Dirty deeds dunder cheesee."
- Led Zeppelin's "Stairway": The line "it's just a spring clean for the May Queen" misunderstood as "it's just a sprinkling for the bakery."
- Falco's "Rock Me Amadeus" misheard as "Rock me, I'm a dumbass." (Or "Amadeus Amadeus, Amadeus..." as "Hot potatoes hot potatoes, hot potatoes...")
- REM's "Man on the Moon": The line of "Andy are you goofing on Elvis?" misheard as "Annie are you puking on Elvis?"
- Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire": The line "Hypodermics on the shore, China's under martial law" misheard as "Hypodermincs on the show, vaginas under martial law" (don't we wish)

And there's lots more. Visit this one, spend a while just browsing artists and lyrics, and by all means, tell them your own embarrassing misunderstood lyrics.

WORLD SEXUAL RECORDS

[HTTP://WWW.SEXUALRECORDS.COM](http://www.sexualrecords.com)

You can imagine Salemi getting all nervous about this pornographic addition to my repertoire of Net reviews, but luckily it isn't pornographic at all. World Sexual Records is a unique clearinghouse for information related to sex — very informative and, in many cases, very scientific.

I could go on for a dozen long paragraphs about what you'll find here, but to make a long story short, I won't — this one is one to look at, for sure. The only thing I will say is, men, the secret about penis length is answered here, and the 90% majority claiming to have eight inches or more is about to be very surprised.

But women aren't left out. The truth is finally laid out on the table: women just don't have eight-inch deep vaginas, so what's the point to all these claims to monster penises at all?

There's far more than genitalia covered here, however. A must-see for those of you interested in sex, love, marriage, et al.

Oh, and — the guy doing the site has a tendency to be pretty damn funny. Check out the "Longest Sustained Erection" section and consider yourself challenged not to at least snicker.

LOST IN THE TRANSLATION

[HTTP://HEARSAY.SIMPLENET.COM/
TRANSLATION/](http://hearsay.simplenet.com/translation/)

This site may be unremarkable to look at, but it's contents aren't. I don't laugh at Net-based humor stuff very much, because a billion AOLers tend to send me the SAME STUFF EVERY DAY, but this one had me nearly in tears.

What this site does is present categories of things lost in the translation. From misunderstood slang and idioms to errors in word substitutions to just plain failure to interpret, they've got it all. It's worthy to note that some categories have several pages which are visited by clicking on nearly non-descript links at the very bottom, so if you think the page is over too quickly, look again.

The Classic Confusion category has nifty entries like an English sign in a Japanese pet store reading, "Fondle dogs." Let's hope nobody tries it! Those crazy Japanese! That's nearly as funny as how they marked a sewage treatment plant on a road map — "Dirty Water Punishment Place." Bad water... BAD water! In Bangkok, a dry cleaner tells you to "Drop your trousers here for best results." Six lengthy pages of laughs are in this category.

Ever read subtitles from foreign films and had to wonder what the hell they were thinking? The Hong Kong Films category covers this one with wondrous gems like "Beware! Your bones are about to be disconnected!" and "How can you use my intestines as a gift?"

Advertising: oh, the laughter here. Some you may have heard about — Kentucky Fried Chicken learning with horror that "Finger Lickin' Good" translated into Chinese as "Eat Your Fingers Off," Coca-Cola realizing too late that the phonetic sound of their product's name in Chinese translated as "Bite the wax tadpole" or "Female horse stuffed with wax," and so on. But did you know that Pepsi's old slogan "Pepsi brings you back to life" translated as "Pepsi will bring your ancestors back from the dead" — again in Chinese? Don't worry, there are plenty of other languages to laugh at here. For instance, nearly everyone has heard that GM realized too late that marketing their Chevy Nova in South America was a mistake, since "no va" in Spanish means "it doesn't go." But did you know that the Ford Pinto suffered an embarrassing fate in Brazil? Brazilian slang has "pinto" meaning "tiny male genitals." Oops! Three pages full of gut-busters here. In complementary fashion, a category of Japanese Packaging gives us more to laugh at in the way of mistranslations on products.

Speaking of products, some product names just don't make sense when translated into English. How about a Japanese toilet paper brand named *My Fanny*? Or how about this entertaining pair of Chinese head-scratchers: soda named *Libido* and glue called *Ass Glue*. Nothing, of course, tops the Ghanaian pepper sauce named *Shitto*. Probably reflective of what you have to do soon after eating too much of it.

Eating off an English menu in a foreign country can be enough to make you skip the main course. In Vietnam you can get "pork with fresh garbage." Spain will serve up goose barnacles. And the Japanese — they do seem to have more than their fair share of English blunders — offers my favorite, demonstrating how word order makes a huge difference: "Teppan Yaki — Cooked Before Your Right Eyes."

For humor, the mistranslation tidbits you've seen in mailings likely came from this site; but here it is, all in one spot. A half hour will be all you'll need to cover the things here, but you'll want to send everyone you know here and come back again yourself. The site will gladly accept any humorous mistranslations you may have come across — and if you *do* come across some, be sure to wipe it off with Japan's Last Climax tissues.

QUICK PICKS

ROGER EBERT'S REVIEW OF "NORTH"

[HTTP://WWW.SUNTIMES.COM/EBERT/
EBERT_REVIEWS/1994/07/931635.HTML](http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/EBERT_REVIEWS/1994/07/931635.HTML)

I've been aware for years how bad virtually *everyone* claims Rob Reiner's movie *North* was, but when I saw Rob Reiner at a New York Friar's Celebrity Roast get up and actually read Roger Ebert's review of this disaster, I had to visit and bookmark. Check this out for rollicking laughter, and remember how Rob was such a great sport about it at the roast — particularly when reading the next to last paragraph. Ebert's other reviews are worth perusing, as well.

ROGER ZELAZNY & THE AMBER SERIES

[HTTP://ASHERAH.VIRTUALAVE.NET/RZ/](http://asherah.virtualave.net/rz/)

Nothing epitomizes *art brut*, in my humble eyes, in modern fantasy literature more than this. I've been a huge fan of *Amber* since a girlfriend told me — not recommended, *told me*, to read the Corwin series in 1991. I was instantly hooked in the most original, most engrossing fantasy setting I'd ever been immersed in. I followed it with the Merlin series and, like many Zelazny devotees, cried when Zelazny had died (we all know he was certainly planning a third series, considering how the second had ended). There are a lot of Amber-related sites on the Net, but this guy has the best page out there — and he links to everything Amber on the Net that is worth mattering. If you're an Amber fan, check it out. If you're not, run, don't walk, to the nearest book store (new or used) or type your way to Amazon.com or BN.com and order all ten books in the series. You won't regret it. Then return to this site.

THE THINKING APE BLUES

[HTTP://WWW.THINKINGAPEBLUES.COM](http://www.thinkingapeblues.com)

Brutarian's own Mark Poutenis is a very talented guy whose comic strip *The Thinking Ape Blues* is reportedly being made into live-action short subjects, with Mark himself playing the naked, beer-guzzling Ben. Check out his site and currently nine sample strips available for your perusal and don't forget, two strips appear in these very pages).

INDY'S WEBBLE OF DOOM

[HTTP://MEMBERS.MINT.NET/INDY](http://members.mint.net/indy)

A bunch of people have asked me if I have a personal Web site, in addition to the Prolepsis Games site at <http://www.prolepsisgames.com> and the Cavalier Enterprises site at <http://www.prolepsisgames.com/company/ce>. The answer is yes, and here it is. I love positive emails, but no long-running diatribes about how my taste in music, TV, movies, et al., is completely wrong because you don't agree with it. I get pretty vicious.

David "Indy" Fitzpatrick lays out *Brutarian* and maintains its Web site, as well as writes this column and occasionally other things such as fiction. You can read his bio at:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/fitzpatrickdavid.htm>

1-800-FOR-ATTN

by Josh Criss

Ackman adjusted his scarf as he stepped out of the office building, blending anonymously into the throng of pedestrians. The energy level of the city rose as the weekend ticked down. Engines revved more frantically and horns blared; high heels clicked with a quicker, more determined pace; briefcases weaved deftly through the crowd. Twenty minutes to five, but the weekend had already started.

"About time," he whispered. The week had dragged on forever. He wondered if Wendy would call, or if he'd have to wait until her next session to see her again. He hadn't mentioned it to Jack, his analyst, that he was interested in another of his own patients. He'd heard the speeches from other colleagues. It was only natural that patients develop attachments for their therapists, and he'd have to be an unprofessional lech for taking advantage. And hadn't he learned anything from the last time? He'd ended up marrying her and it had lasted less than ten months, deteriorating almost from the beginning... until he found her in the garage one Sunday morning, slumped in his idling Mercedes. She'd also withdrawn \$141,000 from their bank account, and by now he was resigned to never knowing where it went.

He shoved the memory aside, thinking of what he might do this weekend with Wendy. It had been more than a year since he'd been with anyone, and this time he was determined not to break down and go to a whore. His ballooning weight didn't help things, and he was developing a crown of baldness toward the back. A general disintegration of his body in the first three years of his forties. He ambled toward a hot-dog vendor and ordered two with mustard and relish, thinking to hell with his diet for the weekend, he'd be extra good afterward. He stood beside the cart and ate, and was halfway through his second dog when he saw her on the opposite corner: the most beautiful woman he had ever laid eyes on. He stared, rapt, before the crowd obscured her; and defying all laws of the universe, she caught and returned his gaze, and smiled. And the next brief moment when the heads between them cleared, he saw she was still looking. He began to cross without thinking, only to be reminded by an angry horn that he didn't have the light.

She looked even better as he closed the distance. She was curvaceous, and not too thin; breeder's hips and larger than average breasts, crammed into a seamless, stretch-to-fit red dress. Long, glossy black hair weaved down to her waist, perfectly framing a face that could grace the cover of any magazine—a face like Andrea's, who he'd admired fruitlessly, and from afar, in college.

Ackman reached the sidewalk, going a few steps out of his way to toss the half-dog and paper basket into a trashcan. She smiled directly at him as he approached, holding out a small piece of paper in his direction. While disappointed that she was handing out flyers, he took the sheet without taking his eyes off her, conscious of his thinning hair and rumpled

dress shirt.

"Could you use more attention in your life, sir?" she asked, beaming as he took the handout. "We have all the answers, after all. Wouldn't you love to know what people *really* think of you?"

"I tell you, normally I don't take these," he started, before her words sank in. "I'd love to know *what?*" He scanned the crowd in every direction, certain that Jack was watching from a distance, but didn't see him.

"Are you alright, sir?" she asked, her smile unwavering. He stared down at the flyer, a white sheet with a laser-printed floral border. It read:

TIRED OF NOT GETTING
THE ATTENTION YOU DESERVE?
CALL 1-800-FOR-ATTN
FOR 6 WEEKS' FREE SERVICE!

Whatever this was, Jack had nothing to do with it, Ackman realized. His session hadn't ended ten minutes ago, too little time to set any of this up. He did his best to recover. "And how would *you* know what people really think of me?" His stomach dropped as their eyes met again. "Exactly what kind of service are we talking about?"

She smiled shyly, as if flustered. "Well, sir, you'll have to call that number to find out."

"You can't tell me what you're *selling?* Honey, you may look amazing—and I mean that, you're about the most gorgeous thing I've ever seen—" he paused, but the comment didn't even seem to register. "But people won't rush to call based on that sales pitch." He forced a smile, wondering for the first time why he alone was talking to this vision in red. He would have expected her to be surrounded by men within seconds.

"Most people could use our special attention, and that alone convinces them to call. And the service *works.*"

"What is the service?"

"If you call that number, you'll find out."

"Does it involve *you* at all?"

"If you call that number, you'll find out."

"Maybe you'll come over and live with me for six weeks? Show me some attention?"

She turned half-away, head down. When she looked at him again, he felt himself getting hard.

"Why don't you call that number, and find out?"

He grinned coolly, stuffing the flyer into his coat pocket. "I just might, honey. Don't be surprised if I do." He squeezed her hand then turned to cross the street, trying to look nonchalant. An escort service; he should have known. Sure, she'd come and live with him, for three hundred an hour. But why hand out flyers on a busy street corner? A girl like that was referral only. She was probably just a model that the real

dregs had hired to drum up business. As he reached the corner he turned for another look, hoping she might still be staring in his direction, but she was gone. He scanned the crowd for half a minute before giving up.

Ten-thirty found Ackman on his sofa, eating Thai food and watching television while he waited for Wendy to call. She'd been his patient for eight months, a harmless neurotic with a shitty job and a failing long-term relationship. He'd been hot for her from the beginning. She had the look of a young librarian, plain, with straight hair and little makeup. He suspected she'd be a wild fuck, if she ever let go sexually. And who better to let go with than himself? Just this week she'd finally gained enough confidence to tell her parasitic boyfriend to hit the road, and Ackman had suggested they have dinner this weekend to celebrate. She'd been a bit startled by the offer, but he'd always sensed an underlying interest, so he didn't backpedal. He gave her a business card with his home

phone number written on it, told her to call him anytime, and rest his hand on her bare shoulder as he'd escorted her to the door.

Now, with the time nearing eleven, he was surprised and a little indignant she hadn't called.

"Messed-up bitch," he muttered, moving toward the refrigerator for another beer. Tilting the bottle back, he lifted the flyer from his kitchen counter. *1-800-FOR-ATTN*. Unlikely as it was, maybe he'd be able to see the woman he'd met earlier. Right now, 300 bucks an hour seemed pretty fair. He picked up his cordless handset, squinting down at the letters, and dialed.

A long silence, then a ring sounding faraway and fuzzy, like a call to some third-world country. Ackman's brow wrinkled in confusion. The other end picked up, but there was only silence.

"Hello?" Ackman said, straining to listen, hearing nothing



but crackles of interference. Then a recorded female voice spoke, cheerily synthesized and alien: "Your request for attention... has been *confirmed*." The line went dead.

"What a crock of shit!" Ackman growled, crumpling up the flyer and tossing it into the garbage. "Thanks for making my night, honey." He returned to the sofa, taking two extra beers.

The weekend passed without a call from Wendy. On his way out the door Monday morning, Ackman saw a folded newspaper on his doorstep. He frowned, not bothering to pick it up; he only subscribed to the Wall Street Journal and that was delivered to his office. By the time he returned that evening it was nine-thirty. He'd gone to happy hour with the office building's doorman, and argued about the current and future status of the Knicks, and swigged three or four too many. He grabbed the newspaper from the doorstep and shuffled inside, knowing whichever neighbor it belonged to would never see it. He poured a giant glass of water and carried the paper to his dining room table, unfolding it across the wood. Drinking, he stared beyond the glass at the blazing headline:

ACKMAN REQUESTS ATTENTION
6 Weeks' Free Service for New York's
Greatest Psychologist

It took a few seconds for his alcohol-fogged brain to process the words. He paused in mid-swallow, setting the glass on the table, his eyes drifting to a lower heading:

GREENE FINISHED AS CLIENT
Harassment Suit Considered

Slack-jawed, he read:

(AT) In an uncharacteristically bold move, Ms. Wendy Greene of Elizabeth, N.J. has terminated her therapy with Psychologist Reginald Ackman. Greene reached this decision last Tuesday after Ackman made what she considered "shockingly unprofessional" advances, which included unwanted physical contact and the suggestion that the two meet outside Ackman's office.

An eight-month client of Dr. Ackman's, Greene has considered contacting the American Psychological Association's Office of Ethics for guidance. Greene has not decided whether she will notify Ackman before taking the matter up with (see GREENE, pg. 4)

Ackman's hand shook as he pulled out a chair. This was obviously a blackmail attempt, never mind the bizarre approach. Wendy and whoever else was in on it—probably the same scumbag she'd supposedly ditched—must have figured the evidence would be more shocking in newspaper format, like a ready-made worst-case scenario. Screw her, he hadn't done anything that couldn't be explained. The hand on her shoulder was merely a gesture of approval, the invitation to dinner a genuine desire to celebrate her so-called progress. And what could she want from him? Blackmail was the last thing he'd expect from Wendy.

He looked down at the paper's masthead:

Ackman Times
"Setting the Standard in Attention Services"

That woman on the street corner, and her nonsense handout. *Ackman Requests Attention*. He'd called the number, but never left his name or any other identifier. Maybe they'd ID'ed the number, gotten his name, gleaned all the other information afterward?

He read the article that followed:

(AT) Last Friday evening at 10:48, noted Psychologist Reginald Ackman took matters into his own hands and ordered six weeks of the finest attention service available: the *Ackman Times*. Ackman has long felt a need to know "what others really think" of him, as expressed to his therapist earlier that day. By calling the Times' toll-free number, Ackman has assured that every facet of his life will be scrutinized in the greatest detail....

The article went on and on, further lauding the attention-providing skills of the *Times*, commending his "bold" decision to call the 1-800 number, never providing more than vague references to those responsible. Jack had to be behind this. Maybe Wendy knew Jack, maybe he'd mentioned Jack to her, and she'd gone to him to complain? And the two of them had concocted this paper, for what reason he couldn't imagine? Maybe as a joke and nothing more?

But then there was the woman on the street corner just minutes after leaving Jack's office, and that was the first time he'd spilled his guts about "wanting to know what people really thought of him." No way Jack could have set that up so quickly. And without Jack, no link to Wendy made sense.

Cursing, he flipped the paper over. It was all a single section, eighteen pages total. The back page contained scattered advertisements—sale prices for items ranging from dishwashers to umbrellas, both of which he needed. His dishwasher was on its last legs, sputtering and clunking through every cycle. His umbrella had blown out last week, ten feet from his front door. He'd tossed it away and hadn't mentioned it to anyone—hadn't even *thought* about it—and here was an ad for a great deal on an umbrella at Macy's. The same went for the other ads, all for purchases he'd put on the back burner.

He moved to the window and stared out at the blackness beyond, at a loss for what to do. Finally, he pulled the curtains tightly together and returned to the table, opening to a random page. In the center was a small, square column titled NOTABLE OCTOBER 12 EVENTS. Today's date. Within the square were three listings:

- 1961: Martin joins the family
- 1972: Joy ride with Greg Foster
- 1987: Onset of food poisoning, Boston, MA

"Martin...?" Ackman whispered. He hadn't thought of Martin in years. The cat had died soon after Ackman left home for college, in 1975. Ackman's mother always theorized that dear Martin had died of a broken heart when Ackman left. Ackman preferred to think it was because dear Martin was

fourteen and had a failing digestive tract.

Martin joins the family. Ackman couldn't remember a point in his childhood before Martin. Fourteen years old in 1975, which meant it had indeed been 1961. Ackman had been four. Aside from his parents, no one else would understand the reference, and not a person on the planet could verify the date as October 12th.

Greg Foster was an older kid who'd lived three houses down the block. Ackman had been fifteen, Greg eighteen or nineteen. Ackman's father had just bought a new car, and Greg convinced Ackman they should take it for a test spin on the Shore Parkway. Ackman had been grounded for two months and forbidden to even look in Greg Foster's direction for the rest of his life.

He knew for sure that the food poisoning episode took place in October, because the people he was with wanted to drive up to Vermont to see the foliage. In fact they *had*, leaving him shivering and puking in their Boston hotel room for two days alone. They'd eaten at a waterfront seafood restaurant and he was the only one who'd gotten sick. He hadn't touched scallops since.

No one but him could know about all three incidents. His legs felt weak with the realization. He sagged in the chair, his eyes drifting to the wall phone.

1-800-FOR-ATTN.

The ring sounded normal this time. He let it ring fifteen times before hanging up.

With nothing else to do, he returned to the paper. Until the early hours of the morning he read about himself: how his fast food intake had risen 23% in the past eighteen months, and the resulting weight gain; detailed graphs of this year's projected income compared to previous years; a breakdown of all the advantages his new home had over the condo. He took the paper to the sofa and fell asleep with its pages strewn across his shirt and tie.

The room was dark when he jolted awake, and it took him a moment to remember how he'd ended up on the couch. He felt for the paper, hands patting his chest, the surrounding cushions, reaching to the floor, finding nothing. Stiffly, he rose and switched on the light. When his eyes adjusted, he could see only the depressed cushions of the sofa and his empty water glass on the coffee table.

"What the fuck?" he said aloud. He shuffled to the dining room table, searched the kitchen, even checked the garbage, but the *Ackman Times* had disappeared. He didn't have time to dwell on it. Today's appointments started at 8:30, only ninety minutes away.

When he left the house, he found another paper on the doorstep. He unfolded it just enough to verify what is was, and put it in his briefcase.

"Any calls?" he asked his secretary, not expecting any. He was halfway through the door to his office suite when she spoke.

"Ms. Greene called a few minutes ago. She cancelled." He halted, his insides knotting. "A reschedule?"

"Uh, uh. She sounded real no-nonsense. Like 'I won't be coming today,' and that was it. Real unfriendly for her."

Ackman nodded, taking it in. "Get me her number," he

said, before entering his office and closing the door. His palms were sweaty by the time the intercom buzzed. He jotted the number down, took a deep breath, and picked up his phone. She answered on the second ring.

"Wendy?"

"This is. Reggie?"

"I... got a message you wouldn't be coming in. Is everything ok?"

"I'm fine. Really, the reason—"

"I wanted to make sure there wasn't any misunderstanding after your last visit. You seemed a bit surprised when I asked you to dinner, and I wanted to make sure you understood... it was only in celebration of your progress. I hope you didn't take it the wrong way."

Silence.

"Is *that* why you're not coming in? Wendy, I thought you knew me better than that. You know I wouldn't do anything to... jeopardize the strides you've made."

"Yes, but... you never did anything like that before."

"Wendy, listen. Never for an *instant* would I breach our trust. Looking back, I probably should have taken a different approach, but let's keep things in proper perspective, ok?"

A pause. "I didn't know *how* to take it, or what to do. I was even thinking of... getting legal advice."

Ackman laughed. "For *what*? I tell you, I won't be asking anyone to dinner for a long time." He listened for a chuckle on her end, but there was none. "So — now that we've cleared that up, can I expect you at two?"

"Uh... would it be ok if I skipped today?"

"Of course. Not a problem."

"I'll call you later in the week about rescheduling."

NEED A WEB SITE? LET US DO IT.

We did www.brutarian.com for this magazine — but that's not all. Check us out at our Web site below for references to other successful sites we've assembled and maintained. We work with clients to build sites with personal flares.

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"Ok, Wendy." He put down the receiver and his entire body sagged in relief. He had ten minutes before his first client arrived. Reaching for his briefcase, he pulled out the latest edition of the *Ackman Times*.

"Damn thing saved my ass," he said, unfolding the paper across his desk.

Jack called him at the office three weeks later. Ackman was expecting his call. He'd just read yesterday how surprised Jack was that Ackman hadn't sought further counseling. The night of their last session, Jack and his wife had laughed about Ackman over dinner. Ackman had known both of them since college. In the days of Ackman's first marriage, they had been a regular foursome. But according to yesterday's article, Ackman had always been something of a joke between them.

"Why should I come to *you* for help?" Ackman asked, leaning back in his leather chair. "Things are going my way, Jacky." And they were. Based on portfolio changes suggested in *The Ackman Times*, he'd made \$2,200 in four days. Last Thursday's article "Recent Sluggishness Attributed to Diet" had him eating healthier, and he already felt years younger. Wendy had quietly ended her therapy, the cleanest resolution he could have hoped for. Best of all, he had a date this weekend with another one of his clients, a twenty-eight year old grad student he never would have guessed he had a chance with until last Friday's article.

"Hey, I'm glad things are going well," Jack replied. "But I expected to hear from you after our session, and Lin and I were wondering—"

"Yeah?" Ackman shot in. "Let me guess. You and Lin were wondering how the 'egocentric basket case' was doing. Right?"

A long silence.

"Right, Jacky?"

"I don't know..."

Ackman laughed. "Hell, I have operatives everywhere, buddy. Remember that. The 'dump on Reginald' days are over. Every wall has a fucking ear from this point on." He hung up. Let Jacky try to figure that one out.

He pulled out today's still-unread edition from his briefcase, holding it high. "Praised be the times!" he yelled, opening it up. Good stuff in this edition. According to the front page, his immune system had gotten a real burst from the recent diet change, and it was unlikely he'd catch cold this winter. More advice on mutual funds that would likely make him a bundle. A full diagnosis of his recent elbow problem, which turned out to be nothing more than mild tendonitis. And reassurance that the grad student was thrilled about their upcoming date. She was his for the taking.

In spite of the good news, he frowned uneasily at page eight. For the second day in a row there was a photo, appearing under the caption "Shot of the Day." Yesterday's photo had showed him entering his office building the day before, the picture taken by someone on the opposite sidewalk. Today's picture was far more unsettling. It showed him pulling out of the driveway yesterday on his way to work, looking over his shoulder to back out. The picture had been snapped from inside the house, through the front window. If he'd looked forward at that instant, he would have seen the

photographer.

Had the picture for tomorrow's edition already been taken?

When he returned to his house that evening, Ackman took a tire iron from the trunk. He checked every room and closet before making dinner. When he went to bed, he kept the tire iron within easy reach.

He woke before sunrise and went directly to the front door to grab *The Ackman Times*. Standing just inside, he opened the paper to page eight.

There was another picture, but the caption this time read "Shot of the Night." It showed him asleep in bed, open-mouthed and oblivious, one hand draped loosely over the tire iron. Whoever took the picture had been standing above him.

Fighting the urge to run outside in his underwear, he scurried to the phone.

"911 Emergency."

"This is Doctor Ackman, 316 East Bernard Lane," he whispered, cupping his hand over the mouthpiece. "I think there's someone in my house. An intruder."

"Someone broke into your house?"

"I think the intruder is here now."

"Do you have evidence of break-in?"

"I..." he paused, looking at the paper on the counter. "I have evidence of a break-in. Send someone fast."

"316 East Bernard Lane, a cruiser is on the way, please remain on the line."

When he heard a siren minutes later, he ran to the closet for an overcoat before opening the front door. A policeman was coming toward him, hand on his holster. "I made the call!" Ackman yelled, waving the officer in. "I think they're still inside."

"Someone is inside the house now?" He drew his gun, and Ackman felt safe.

Ackman led him down the stairs, toward the kitchen. "I didn't actually see anyone. Someone took... a *picture* of me while I was sleeping, I found it this morning." He'd never shown the *Times* to anyone, and had no idea how he was going to explain the paper's format. But he had to justify the call.

"A picture of you *sleeping*?" the officer asked skeptically.

"It's right here—" he started, but only the cordless phone handset lay atop the counter. "Someone has to be in the house!" Ackman cried, yanking cupboard doors open feverishly. "That fucking paper was just here!"

"Calm down, sir. What paper?"

"The paper with the page eight photo! The one of me sleeping!"

"Sir, calm down. Let's go out--"

"Goddamnit, just let me look!"

"Sir, you are going to come outside with me. Right now. Do you understand?"

As they moved outside, Ackman apologetically explained that he'd been under great stress these past few days, and that it was quite possible it had all been a very realistic dream. He was a *psychologist*, after all. These things happened. "What can I tell you?" he shrugged. "I feel silly. That whole 'photo' thing must have been a case of psycho-nocturnal carryover." He couldn't tell if the cop believed him. "The by-product of stress and lack of sleep. I'll take today

off, that's for sure." He smiled shakily. "All I need is some rest."

When the officer left, Ackman stayed just inside the front door, listening for movement anywhere in the house, hearing nothing. Half an hour later, he braved his way to the phone and called his secretary to say he wouldn't be in. Then he dialed 1-800-FOR-ATTN. Someone picked up immediately.

"CTVN, where can I direct your call?" The voice of a young woman.

"Is this *For Attention*?" he demanded, surprised to hear his voice crack. He was shaking. "Who there does the Times?"

"I think you have the wrong number."

"No, I dialed *for attention*. F-O-R-A-T-T-N."

"For attention?" she giggled. "This is CTVN, Children's Television Network. You have the wrong number."

"Children's..." he rubbed a sweaty palm down his jaw. "How long have you had this number?"

"Always, mister." She laughed again.

"Fuck you!" he screamed, slamming the phone on the counter. But he knew she was telling the truth.

That night Ackman stayed at a hotel in the city. When he stepped from his suite next morning, suitcase in hand, a new Ackman Times was lying atop the complimentary USA Today. Standing in the corridor, he opened to page eight. The *Shot of the Day* showed him standing beside his driveway, trying to convince the cop not to take him in for evaluation. The photo had been taken through the window, from inside the house. Without reading a word, Ackman walked the paper to a nearby housekeeping cart and tossed it in the wastebasket, unconsciously wiping his hands on his pants as he headed toward the elevator.

He went to dinner with the grad student that evening, drank nearly two bottles of wine by himself, and ended up spending the night at her apartment. The Times was waiting for him when he arrived home next morning. He sat on the front stoop and unfolded it. For the first time, the front page had a photo—and a very graphic one, at that. It had been taken from his date's bedroom doorway a few minutes after their clothes hit the floor. From the lighting, it even appeared a flash had been used. The headline read:

ACKMAN GETS SOME
Performance "Lousy" as
Described to Girlfriend

The package from Gary arrived at his office on Monday. Ackman cut through three layers of sealing tape and lifted out the revolver, stashed in the bottom row of a box of Godiva chocolates. A snub-nosed, .38 caliber pistol. Six bullets had been individually taped to the bottom of the box.

"I'll give you the fucking *shot of the night*," he hissed, pushing bullets into the cylinder. He spun the loaded cylinder coolly before putting the gun in his top desk drawer. The intercom buzzed, causing him to jump.

"What?" he asked angrily.

"Ms. Vespida is here."

"She's twenty minutes early."

"I know. She—" Ackman could hear Audrey Vespida's scratchy warble in the background chattering over his secre-

tary. "—she says she has to talk to you for a few minutes before her session. Says it's very important."

Ackman sighed. Everything was important to Audrey Vespida, who seemed to need only a twice-weekly captive audience. She would go on and on about her psychic groups, tarot cards and chakra fields, and Ackman would nod every few sentences. He didn't care so long as her bills were paid.

Ackman stuffed the shipping carton into the wastebasket. "Send her in."

"I just *had* to talk to you right away," she began, before his secretary had closed the door. She took the seat nearest his desk and positioned her gigantic, tinted eyeglasses above her forehead. "Last night Patti Bolon—the best psychic in our group—was talking about you. She didn't mention you by *name*, of course, but she said she saw someone who was a regular part of my life, a man that wasn't my husband. And she said he was, well, *hefty*... and that he was losing his *hair*, and that he was the best *listener* I knew! Can you believe it?"

Ackman grunted.

"I mean, I've mentioned that I'm in therapy, but never ever have I described you or said your name! But I knew it was you right away."

"Well, what did she say?"

She leaned forward in her chair, her expression serious. "That's just it, she said she had a vision because this man was in terrible danger. She saw a 'cloud of evil' surrounding him and said if he couldn't find a way out, it would capture him forever."

"The cloud?"

"Of evil. But that was just a *vision*, you know. It repre-

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sents something else. She kept saying 'It's coming after him, something is coming after him,' but couldn't tell what it was. She thought you might owe money to a killer loan shark."

"Something or someone?"

"That's just it, she couldn't tell! But she had you described so perfectly, I knew she had to be right."

He looked across the desk at her and tried to smile, wiping clammy palms across his pants. "Well.... I can't say I'm too sure about your friend's 'vision.' No loan sharks after me last time I checked. But thanks anyway."

"But Patti is always right, and she described you perfectly."

He shrugged. "Sorry."

"But Reggie, she's *always*—"

"Hey, what the hell do you want? She's wrong."

She stared at him, stunned.

"Audrey, what do you want me to say?" he asked quietly.

"All right," she said finally. "She could have had a crossed vision, where she saw you but read someone else."

He managed a sickly smile. "That's probably it."

"It can happen to even the best psychics."

Ackman wasn't sure if she was reassuring herself, or him.

Flashlight in one hand and gun in the other, Ackman searched every corner of his house before going to bed. He looked in every cupboard and behind every appliance, pawed through the closets, and made a full sweep of the attic. Once inside his bedroom, he tied the double doorknobs together with the belt from his robe. Leaving on every light in the room, he set the pistol on the nightstand before crawling under the covers. He stared wide-eyed for hours before slumping into exhausted sleep. The alarm woke him at six-thirty. Reaching over to silence the buzz, he saw the revolver was gone.

Ackman tore at the covers and leapt from the bed, his heart racing. The pistol tumbled from the bed onto the carpet, and he lunged for it. He pushed the cylinder aside with trembling hands. It was still fully loaded. The knotted belt appeared untouched around the doorknobs, but he felt little comfort as he untied it.

When he opened the front door the *Ackman Times* fell inward, jolting him. He picked the paper up and raised it with his left hand, letting it unfold. His stomach lurched. A photo on the front page showed him lying in bed. A blurred, shadowy hand—the only indistinct part of the picture—was holding his .38, and the barrel had been placed between his sagging, unconscious lips. The headline read:

ACKMAN NEARLY BECOMES STATISTIC
Handguns Used Against Owners
in 42% of Shootings

Ackman slammed the front door and hurled the paper away. The pages separated and floated haphazardly to the floor. "WHAT THE FUCK DO YOU WANT?" he bellowed hoarsely, his voice reverberating against the silence. Pant-

ing, he gathered the scattered pages and crumpled them into a tight ball. He saw lots of photographs—at least one on every page—but refused to focus on any. Moving to the kitchen, he lit a stovetop burner and held the mashed paper over the gas flame. The pages ignited as if soaked in kerosene. As he dropped the flaming ball onto the stovetop, a tremendous crashing shook the ceiling directly above his head. Coming from his bedroom. Two gigantic thumps, then silence. Fearless with rage, Ackman bolted up the stairs. Holding the cocked revolver ahead of him, he shoved the bedroom double-doors open and charged inside.

He wasn't surprised to find no one there. His bed had been overturned, the heavy wooden frame leaning crazily against the wall. One of the bedposts had punched into the sheetrock. Ackman grabbed his wallet and overcoat and left the house, not locking the door.

"Don't ask," he said to his secretary when she arrived at the office, his bare chest showing through the overcoat. "A pipe burst in my closet, ruined every shred of clothing I own." He handed her a piece of paper and his ATM card. "Those are my measurements and that's the card's PIN. I need you to get me some pants and a shirt and tie. Get me a few shirts while you're at it."

She looked at him wide-eyed. "You want me to withdraw from your *account*? How much?"

"Whatever it takes. I have nothing until eleven. Just hurry." The moment the door closed, Ackman thumbed through her Rolodex for Audrey Vespida's number.

An answering machine picked up. He was about to hang up when Audrey cut the recording off, her voice groggy. "Wait, wait a second, I'm here. Hello?"

"Audrey. Reggie Ackman."

"Reginald? What time is it? What's wrong?"

"I..." he cupped the mouthpiece and whispered. "I can't believe I'm saying this... but your friend was right." He laughed bitterly, surprised that sharing the experience choked him up.

"My friend? Patti? Oh, I *knew* it! She's always right, she described you, I knew she had to be..." suddenly aware of her tone, she grew quiet. "What is it, Reginald?"

"It's crazy... I can't..." but then it all poured out, starting with the woman passing out flyers and ending with his fleeing the house. She hung on every word, occasionally shouting "Yes!" or "Ah!" as if she recognized something similar to what her friend had told her two nights before.

"I'll call Patti and consult Madame Kotliarov for an energy reading," she explained. "After that—"

"Madame *who*?"

"Patti channels a priestess from 16th-century Russia who can tell us what we're up against."

He ran a hand down his face. "16th-century Russia."

"I'll call you as soon as we have something. Where will you be? You shouldn't go home tonight."

"The Marriott on West 65th. I'm there for the rest of the week."

"West 65th."

"Leave me a message. I'm booked all afternoon, so I'll have to wait until I get to the frigging hotel to talk with you."

"Will you be okay, Reginald?"

He found himself ashamed to be asked that question by Audrey Vespida. "Yeah."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Just do it, ok?"

A robotic voice on the hotel-room phone announced that Ackman had a single message, and he sighed gratefully. "Time of message: four-twenty PM." Just over an hour ago.

"Reginald, it's Audrey. Listen to me carefully." Ackman could hear she was crying. "You're in deep trouble. Patti was screaming throughout the channel, she said Madame Kotliarov never showed her such awful things. God, she wouldn't stop screaming... she told me that you 'rejected' the paper, so its creators were coming for you. And they're... they're not from here." She paused; Ackman could hear another woman crying in the background. "But we can't help you, this is way over Patti's head. She says you need to talk to the man who owns the coin shop on East 35th, he'll know what to do. And call me as soon as you get in."

Ackman dialed her number, but the answering machine picked up. He didn't leave a message.

He had rejected the paper, so its creators were coming.

Sitting on the bed, he spread his arms in a friendly gesture, addressing the empty air. "Look, I'll read it from now on, okay? It's no big deal. Let's go back to the way things were. I just didn't like the pictures, but hey, go ahead and take pictures if you want. Who am I to complain? It's a great paper, and—"

From behind him came a low chuckle. Ackman whirled, but nothing was there. He pulled the revolver from his pocket.

They're not from here.

"I'll read it," he continued. "I promise to read it, ok? Do we have a deal?"

Silence.

He called Audrey every five minutes but never got more than the answering machine. Finally, just after nine, a man picked up on the first ring. "Hello?"

"Can I speak with Audrey?"

"Who is this?"

"I... this is Dr. Ackman, returning her call."

"Did she tell you when she'd be home, Doctor?"

"She said she would be home."

"Well, I have no idea where she is. Truth be told, I'm a little concerned."

"Ah... could you please have her call me when she gets in?"

"Yes, Doctor," sighed David Vespida, and hung up.

A loud commercial snapped him awake at 5:10 AM, lying atop the covers fully dressed. He immediately looked to the revolver on the nightstand. It hadn't moved. He got up and opened the door to the suite. The Ackman Times lay outside. "I'm going to read everything, ok?" he said with forced enthusiasm, laying the paper onto the table. Ackman gasped.

The front page showed Audrey Vespida lying atop a grey,

featureless platform in the center of an empty room. She was held in place by a transparent sheet stretched taut from head to toe, her eyes and mouth gaping wide underneath it. A single, thin tube ran from her neck to the edge of the picture. The caption underneath read:

BLOOD ON RESERVE FOR ACKMAN

10.5 Pints O Positive Ready

Should Need Arise

Ackman turned away, holding his stomach. He wouldn't burn this edition, wouldn't flush it down the toilet, wouldn't even throw it away. But his days of reading the *Ackman Times* were over. He moved to a corner of the bed and sat there, staring out the window, waiting for the sun to rise.

It took him an hour to find the coin-shop, driving up and down East 35th until he noticed the sign, barely big enough to read from the street. A tarnished bell atop the door announced his entry. The entire shop was smaller than his hotel suite. Glass cabinets filled with coins and tiny curios lined the walls.

At the sound of the bell, a hulking figure stepped into the shop from a back room. Ackman guessed the man was nearing sixty, his gigantic head topped with sparse wisps of white hair. "Can I help you?" His voice held no trace of pleasantness.

"Audrey sent me. She said you could, ah-- help me. You... are the owner?"

"I don't know any Audrey."

"No, it was her friend— Patti. Patti Bolan."

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The man's eyes narrowed. "What kind of help?"

"I don't... she said that they were *after* me—"

"Son of a *bitch*!" The owner shouted, causing Ackman to back toward the door. "She *knows* what I went through. She *knows*..." Stunned, Ackman saw that there were tears in the man's eyes. "...I couldn't do it again." He turned as if to disappear into the back room but paused, resting one massive hand on the doorway. His shoulders sagged.

"So what was it you asked them for?" he asked, over his shoulder.

"I, ah... more attention."

"Attention." He nodded slowly. "You got lots of that, didn't you?"

"Yeah."

The back room was no larger than the shop itself, its worn, green carpet splattered with random puddles of dried wax. A frayed, misshapen mattress lay in the corner. The walls were bare aside for an identical black symbol smeared onto each: a bowed, diagonal line intersected by two short swipes. "Is that Japanese?" Ackman asked.

The man continued into the bathroom, out of sight. "You don't have much time," he called out, over the clatter of items being moved in search. He emerged holding a straight razor, its blade reflecting the dull light as he approached.

"Whoa!" Ackman protested, holding up his hands as he backed into the corridor. "What the hell is that for?"

The other man stopped, motioning Ackman forward impatiently. "You need the mark on the back of your hand. And the blood. It has to be done now."

"You're going to *cut* me?"

The man held up a mason jar half full of clear liquid. "The blood mixes with this *oil*, and the oil is used to mark your walls. Come on, let's get it done."

Only the image of Audrey Vespida, wrapped and immobile, stopped Ackman from turning and running from the store. His eyes drifted from the razor to the symbol painted onto the walls, and into the other man's face. The man nodded in understanding. "You don't want to waste another second," he said.

They knelt on the carpet together. The man uncapped the mason jar and placed it between them. He took Ackman's right wrist and guided his hand over the jar, palm down. Ackman saw that despite the other man's giant frame, his long arms were withered and feeble; he could yank his hand free if he needed to.

"Hold still," the man commanded, as if reading his thoughts. "This has to be perfect." He positioned the razor above Ackman's hand, moving in slowly.

"Jesus!" Ackman exclaimed. The back of the hand holding the razor was covered with scar tissue, a nearly solid shell of taut, glossy flesh. "How'd you..."

"It took me thirty tries to find the right symbol," the man interrupted, still positioning the razor. "You're lucky, now I know what I'm doing." He lowered the blade and slashed an arc across the length of Ackman's hand. Ackman groaned. Blood flowed freely from the wound to the edge of his hand, pouring into the mason jar and pooling atop the oil.

"That was too deep!" Ackman hissed. "I'll need stitches."

"No. No stitches." He raised the blade again and swiped two short lines across the arc. Ackman swayed on

his knees, his face sickly white.

"Come on, it's nothing," the man said, tilting Ackman's hand above the jar. "We're already done." Rising stiffly, he handed Ackman a roll of paper towels. "Wrap yourself up." He disappeared to the bathroom and returned with three short, wide candles and an ornate metal triangle the size of a coaster.

"You see these? Pay attention." Gingerly wrapping towels into a ball around his hand, Ackman looked up.

"See what I did to my walls? That's what you're going to do as soon as you get home, on every wall of your house. But only paint one wall in your bedroom. Understand?"

"Which bedroom wall?"

"It doesn't matter. Listen." He held up the triangle. "You're going to put this in the center of your bedroom and set one candle *three feet* from each point. At midnight, light the candles and immediately paint the mark onto one of the three blank walls. Any one."

"Yeah. Got it."

"At three AM, blow out the candles. Do the same thing three nights in a row, until the mark is on every wall in your bedroom. Then it will be over."

"Do I have to stay home the entire time?"

"Yes. Don't leave until it's over." He wiped blood from the outside of the jar and screwed on the lid. "Shake this up and dip two fingers into it. Paint the mark that way."

"Just like kindergarten."

The man glared down at him. "You have to leave now," he said finally.

"Who are they?" Ackman asked, in a whisper.

"You couldn't understand. You..." he clenched his jaw, struggling with some unthinkable memory. "You have to go and do this right now."

"They have someone I know," Ackman said. "They took her away. Is there anything...?" his voice trailed off.

"You can say a prayer for her," the man answered. "If it makes you feel better."

The house was exactly as he'd left it, overturned bed and all. Awkwardly holding the revolver and mason jar in his wrapped hand, Ackman moved from room to room, reproducing the symbol on each wall. In his bedroom, he positioned the candles and metal triangle as instructed and painted the wall where the headboard once stood. Then he sat by the unlocked front door and waited, cradling the pistol in his lap. The hours ticked by, and Ackman struggled to stay awake. At midnight he returned to the bedroom and lit all three candles. Choosing a blank wall, he dipped his fingers into the jar and began to paint.

The instant his fingers touched the wall a tortured shriek came from downstairs, freezing him. The scream repeated, louder, and again. Ackman knew who it was. He'd never heard her scream, but he knew. Trembling, he continued. The screaming stopped abruptly, replaced by the sound of something enormous crashing up the stairs and thundering toward the bedroom, shaking the entire house. Even as Ackman completed the final line, the bedroom's double-doors burst inward behind him. He whirled, revolver in hand. But there was nothing. The three flames struggled

for an instant, hissing against the sudden breeze from the doors, then stabilized. The house was quiet.

"Audrey," Ackman choked, shaking. "Jesus, Audrey." He slid to a sitting position in the corner, and waited.

At three, he extinguished the candles and returned to his spot near the front door. A sudden impact jolted him awake some time later, the beginnings of daylight barely visible through the windows. Dazed, it took him a moment to realize what the impact had been, on the other side of the door: the paper had just been delivered. Leading with the pistol, he opened the door inward. Frigid wind bellowed inside.

The paper was there. But stooping for it, Ackman saw that the ink was still wet and running despite the cold; the masthead was an unrecognizable black smear. The front-page headline was equally unreadable, with a solid square of matted ink underneath that might once have been a photo.

He grabbed the paper and hopped back inside, slamming the door in excitement. He unfolded the Ackman Times and saw that the bottom half ended in tatters, as if the paper had been dipped into a wood chipper. All the pages were stuck together by wet ink. He found nothing but watery blotches inside when he peeled them apart.

Shaking with adrenaline, he flipped the paper over. The back page was a blur of ink aside from a clearly-printed box in the upper left corner — the only dry spot in the entire issue, a mere two inches across. Inside the box read:

Tomorrow: Location of \$141,000 Safety Deposit Box
REVEALED!

He stared at the box for nearly half a minute, then crumpled the paper into a pulpy ball. "Not a chance," he whispered, walking to the kitchen's garbage can. "On the ropes, huh? You bet your ass."

He poured a bowl of cereal and turned on the television, trying to stay distracted, his mind inevitably returning to the same point. He'd seen that preview box before, it appeared sporadically, and it was always accurate. All that money, in a safety deposit box all this time. But what sense did that make? Why withdraw the cash if you were going to off yourself a day later?

Because she'd truly *hated* him at the end, that was why. She hadn't been motivated by greed so much as one last "Fuck you, Reggie" before checking out.

"Fuck you, Marcy," he muttered, through a mouthful of cereal.

He stared at the remnants of ink on his hands. After a single night of drawings and candles, the paper had been reduced to a pulpy mess. He could return to the hotel for one more night—only long enough to get tomorrow's article—and continue the sequence afterward. One hundred and forty-one thousand dollars in cash, plus a memory of Marcy that he could live with. For just one more night.

He put the revolver in his coat pocket before stepping outside. A light snowfall had started. From somewhere on his neighbor's property, crows squawked back and forth.

The moment he pulled the front door closed, the deadbolt snapped into place. Numbly, Ackman raised his keys to the lock, praying he'd imagined the sound. The deadbolt was immobile. He gave up trying to turn it in fear that the

key would break off.

From his peripheral vision he glimpsed a flash of light through the nearest window. After a pause there was another, then two more. He cupped his hands against the glass and peered inside. On the only two walls he could see, his painted symbols had been obliterated, scorched away in white-hot flashes. Only their smoldering outlines remained. He saw bursts of light from the hallway as the flares continued in other rooms.

Nearly slipping on the wet grass, Ackman turned and ran for his car.

The sign on the coin-shop door read *Closed*. Ackman tried the knob, then banged on the door repeatedly. No one answered. He stared into the darkened shop, thinking the owner might be taking a shower or still asleep. It was only ten after nine—

By now Ackman's eyes had adjusted enough to see into the hallway leading to the back room, and what lay there. It was a hand. A huge right hand and nothing more, lying palm-down just inside the hallway entrance. If he could look closer, Ackman knew he'd see scar tissue covering the back.

He turned abruptly from the door and doubled over, retching. Freezing wind on his face saved him. He took a deep breath and walked away without looking back.

His key met no resistance as he unlocked his front door. Gun raised, Ackman stepped inside. The weather had cleared and the house was well lit with sunlight. Aside from the burnt-away symbols, nothing inside had changed. The house was so quiet the refrigerator motor seemed loud.

Cautiously, Ackman reached for the mason jar and unscrewed the lid. He slinked to the nearest wall and began to paint, tracing the scorched symbol with two fingers. "No more distractions," he whispered, glancing from side to side. "Think you were hurting this morning? Just wait." Dipping his fingers into the jar, he moved to the next wall.

If anyone had stopped by the house the next day, they would have found the Ackman Times folded neatly on the doorstep. On the front page, they would have seen a photo of Ackman firing the pistol in the direction of the photographer, his eyes wide in horror. They would have seen ACKMAN MISSING emblazoned above the photograph in crisp, headline-type. And if they read the accompanying article, they might have known what happened at 12:00 that morning, and perhaps learned something about Ackman's current whereabouts.

But no one stopped by. Ackman's secretary called the house at ten and endured three angry clients before finally calling police, only to be told that Ackman couldn't be declared missing until the following afternoon. By the time investigators showed up, the paper on Ackman's doorstep had long since vanished, and his subscription officially cancelled.

BQ

Josh Criss is, evidently, a talented talespinner. He can be looked in on at our Web site at this URL:

<http://www.brutarian.com/aboutbq/others/crissjosh.htm>

CONTRIBUTORS

The following contributors appear in this issue. We thought it would be neat to ask them what their New Year's Resolutions are, but that's so old hat. Instead, we figured it would be funnier to assign New Year's Orders and really piss them off.

Jeff Bagato is a writer who sometimes goes under other bizarre aliases and reportedly has something to do with a 'zine called *Mole*. His NYO is to adopt the name "Bob." Just "Bob."

Josh Criss is a writer whose NYO is to find out who in which states has that 800 number and apologize profusely.

Holly Day is Holly Day. Her NYO is to pick just which Holly Day she is... Christine Mas, Holly Ween, Val Day, etc.

Ozzy Fide needs professional help. His NYO is to check himself into the nearest rehabilitation clinic. He won't, of course, and in the end we'll be happy he didn't.

David "Indy" Fitzpatrick is a writer from Bangor, Maine, where he takes care of *Brutarian's* Web site and the magazine's layout. His NYO is to put as many bad pictures of Dom Salemi on the Web site as he can.

Lenore Hart is devastatingly beautiful but married. Her NYO is to remain devastatingly beautiful and not care about the married part. Yeah, right.

Danny Hellman is an artist from New York City. It was his graceful hand which drew our cover. He was worried it looked too Christmasy, but we felt it looked appropriately after-Christmasy and thus New Yearsy. His NYO is to draw more revealing naked women for a change.

Troy Johnson's NYO is to donate some of his hair to Moby.

Kathryn A. Kopple is a great reviewer who sometimes has identity crises

with her name. Her NYO is to marry that Nightline guy and becomes Kathryn Kopple-Koppel. No, wait, that would make her KKK... skip this one.

Chris Krolczyk is an artist from Michigan. His NYO is to send Indy more microbrew beer.

MacFarland is an artist. His NYO is to email the magazine layout guy his first name. He's welcome to join forces with J. Osterhout.

James MacLaren is a slightly insane surfer dude. His NYO is to hit the big waves off the coast of Maine in January. Come ON, James!!!

Justus Magee is an artist from Bangor, Maine. His NYO is to be able to produce art as awesome and funny as Bil Keane's *Family Circus*.

John Oliver gets amazing interviews all the time. His NYO is to interview someone not remotely interesting, like Dom Salemi.

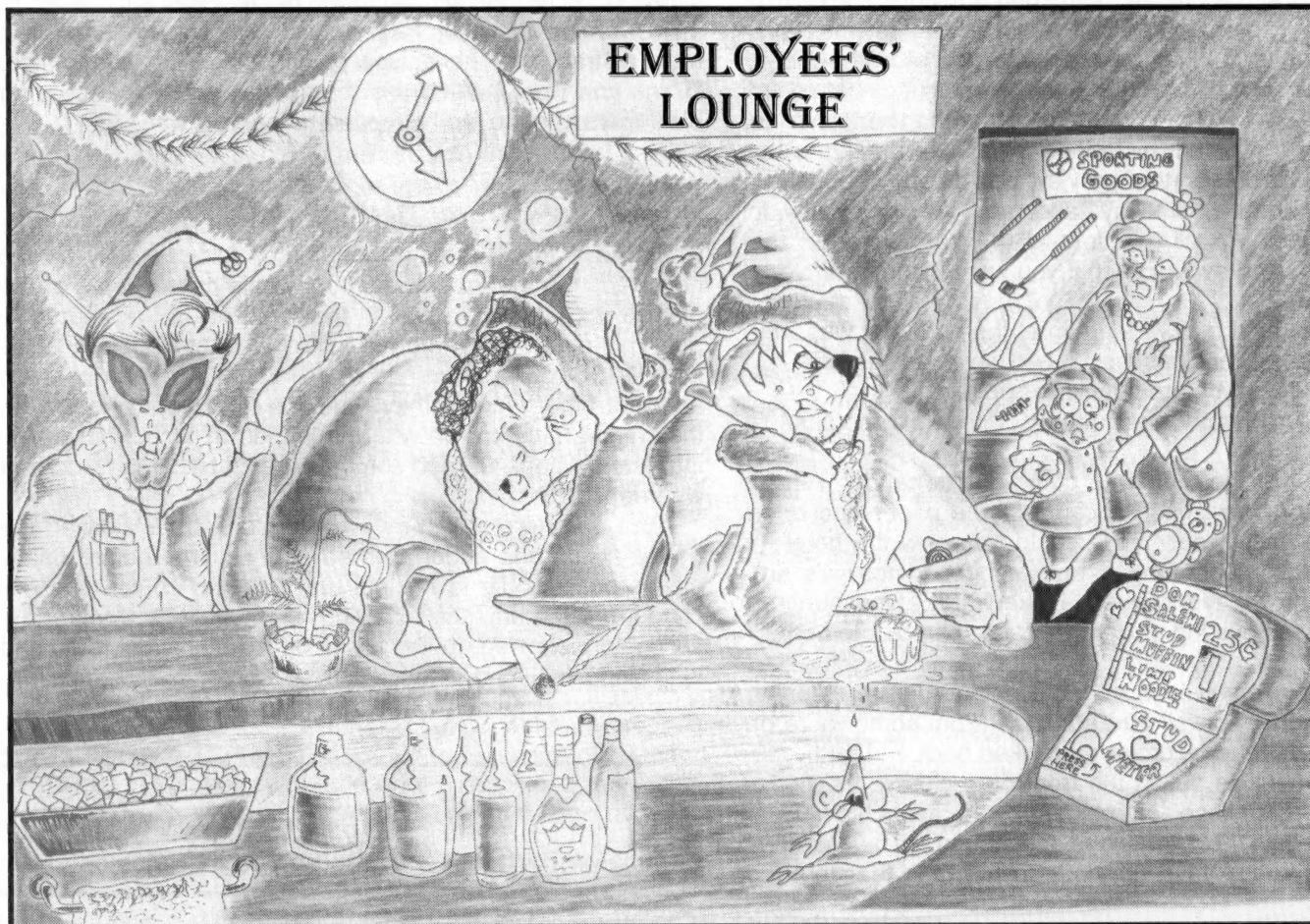
J. Osterhout is funnier than hell, although we suppose there can't be too much about hell that would be a laugh riot. His NYO is to tell Indy what the heck the J stands for. Refer to MacFarland.

Mark Poutenis is an artist from New York City well-known for his *The Thinking Ape Blues*, which appears in our pages and elsewhere. His NYO is to try drinking a little beer for a change.

Stately Wayne Manor is extremely full of himself. There's no worry of a weak ego there. He is ALL man. His NYO is to unzip and prove it.

Gene Stewart is shooting for a Pulitzer Prize in this issue's *Brutarian Library*. His NYO is to get it.

Dom Salemi is the man in charge, the editor and publisher of *Brutarian*. His NYO is to double all our pay rates.



Christmas is over and so is the year 2000, and Justus Magee wanted to voice his take on the whole mess. The jolly old elves in this picture seem to be expressing it quite nicely.

Note how expertly Magee manages to smooch Salemi's butt in this picture. Kissing that derriere is a thankless and painful job, one he does with great skill and without any concern for his own dignity.



The Dirty Danny Legal Defense Fund PO Box 428 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10113-0428

A QUICK AND HIGHLY-OPINIONATED SKETCH OF THE RALL V. HELLMAN LAWSUIT By Danny Hellman

The Rall v. Hellman lawsuit has gotten a modest amount of coverage in the press, (articles have appeared in the New York Press, The New York Observer, the Village Voice, and The Comics Journal), but for those of you who aren't unfamiliar with the case, I'll attempt a brief explanation:

On August 3rd, 1999, the Village Voice published a feature story written by cartoonist and journalist Ted Rall, in which he made wild and unsubstantiated claims that legendary cartoonist Art Spiegelman holds the New York publishing world in some sort of tyrannical grip, making success for any aspiring cartoonist or illustrator impossible without first having to kiss the master's ring. As a moderately successful New York-based illustrator myself, who has never had any contact whatsoever with Art Spiegelman, I immediately saw Rall's thesis to be false.

And I was just one of many who were appalled by this specious hatchet job. When Russ Smith, the publisher of the New York Press wrote an editorial

criticizing Rall's Voice feature, I was overjoyed to contribute the accompanying illustration, which depicted Rall as a small dog urinating on a bronze statue of the Pulitzer Prize-winning MAUS author. In hindsight, I wish I'd let that illustration be the final expression of my disgust with Rall's anti-Spiegelman slam-piece, but I let my strong feelings about the Voice feature get the better of me.

I felt that Rall's nose required a little additional tweaking, and unfortunately decided to play a small e-mail prank on him. The now-infamous "Ted Rall's Balls" prank involved my writing of a parodic statement under Rall's name, which I e-mailed to a list of approximately thirty friends and acquaintances in the comics community, as well as to Rall himself. I then followed up the first message with faked angry responses, which seemed to be coming from famous figures in the publishing industry. (the complete text of the prank can be found at my website: www.dannyhellman.com)

I maintain that this prank was utterly harmless; the virtual

equivalent of a "whoopee cushion". Sensitive soul that he is, Rall declared the prank to be anything but harmless.

Within 48 hours of the start of the prank, I received letters from Rall's lawyers demanding a retraction, and apology, and \$20,000 in financial compensation. I immediately complied with Rall's request for both the apology and retraction, (the apology is also up at my website for public inspection). I felt that Rall's insistence on financial compensation was both ridiculous and opportunistic, so I initially declined to offer any cash.

Within days, I discovered that Rall had filed a lawsuit against me in the New York State Supreme Court, charging me with Libel, Libel Per Se, Injurious Falsehood Invasion of Privacy, and Intentional Infliction of Emotional Distress. The amount of damages asked for in the suit was \$1.5 million dollars; a figure that I am sure you will agree is both outrageous and laughable. It was at this point that I offered Rall's lawyer a \$1000 settlement; apparently this was not the fig-

ure they'd had in mind.

Subsequently, I had no choice but to retain my own lawyer to defend myself, and my bleak march towards bankruptcy began.

It's now been over five months since Rall filed his lawsuit against me, and as you might imagine, my financial situation is getting desperate. I've paid over \$11,000.00 out of pocket in legal expenses; an additional \$7000 which we raised at a benefit concert last December has ALSO been spent on legal fees. We are currently organizing a second benefit concert, as well as a benefit comic book, in order to raise public awareness of the case, as well as much-needed cash.

I don't know if any of you have ever been on the receiving end of a lawsuit; those of you who have understand what an emotionally devastating situation it is. We have gone through months of anxiety riding this runaway roller coaster; only the vengeful individual at the controls knows when it will end.

—Danny Hellman

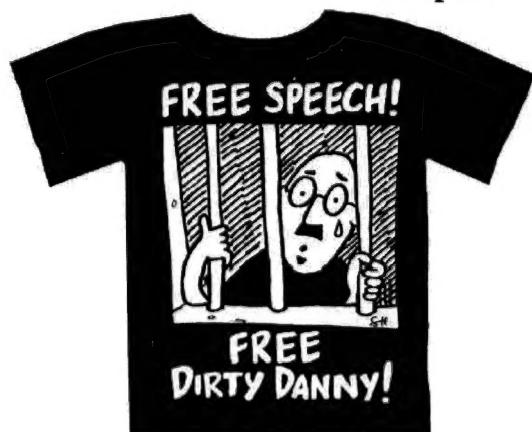
dannyhellman@mindspring.com

READ MORE ABOUT THE RALL V. HELLMAN LAWSUIT AT THE FOLLOWING URLS ON THE INTERNET:

<http://www.dannyhellman.com>

OR VISIT THE OFFICIAL FREE DIRTY DANNY WEBSITE (HOSTED BY MIKE SPERANZA) AT:

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```

READY[]
call cybern
call weapon
call history
end
procedure: order
stat "create"
stat "launch"
stat "go"
stat "execute"
end

procedure:
call play
call play
call play
call play
call game
end

procedure:
call char
call magi
call psio
call powe
call muta
call mira
call cybe
call weap
call hist
end

procedure:
call crea
call fun
call humo
call for
call drin
call dice
call penc
call pape
end

procedure:
load play
load crea
load laun
var x={play*create
*launch}
var y={overload}
var z={imagination
(x*y)}
end

procedure:
exec {x*y}
end

procedure:
call proc
"order"
end

procedure:
stat "create"
stat "lau"
stat "go"
stat "exe"
end

procedure:
call play
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call char
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call weap
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call cybern
call weapon
call history
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procedure: create
call characters
call magic
call psionics
call powers
call mutations
call miracles
call cybernetics
call weapons
call history
end
procedure: launch
call creativity
call fun
call humor
call for pizza
call drinks
call dice
call pencils
call papers
end
procedure: go
load play
load create
load launch
var x={play*create
*launch}
var y={overload}
var z={imagination
(x*y)}
end
procedure: execute
exec {x*y*z}
end
procedure: loop
call procedure
"order"
end
procedure: order
stat "create"
stat "launch"
stat "go"
stat "execute"
end
procedure: play
call player1
call player2
call player3
call player4
call gamemaster
end
procedure: create
call characters
call magic
call psionics
call powers
call mutations
call miracles
call cybernetics
call weapons
call history
end
procedure: launch
call creativity
call fun
call humor
call for pizza
call drinks
call dice
call pencils
call papers
end
procedure: go
load play
load create
load launch
var x={play*create
*launch}
var y={overload}
var z={imagination
(x*y)}
end
procedure: execute
call characters

```

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```

procedure:
call play
call play
call play
call play
call game
end

procedure:
call char
call magi
call psio
call powe
call muta
call mira
call cybe
call weap
call hist
end

var y={overload}
var z={imagination
(x*y)}
end

call papers
end

procedure: loop
call procedure
"order"
end

procedure: order
stat "create"
stat "launch"

```